

AM I OF THE CHOSEN.

REV. HENRY ALOYSIUS BARRY.

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AM I OF THE CHOSEN.



“Do penance: for the kingdom of heaven is
at hand.”—*Matth., Chap. iii, 2.*

AM I OF THE CHOSEN.

THE SAME BEING A

Series of Conferences Spoken

BY THE

REV. HENRY ALOYSIUS BARRY,

TO THE NUNS AND THE PUBLIC
IN THE
CARMELITE CHAPEL IN THE CITY OF BOSTON.

BOSTON:
ANGEL GUARDIAN PRESS,
1897.

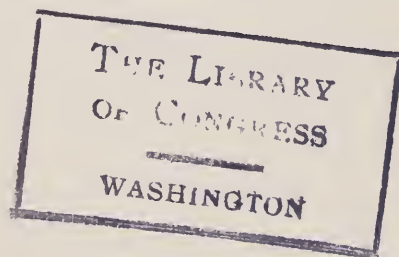
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*Roxbury,
Mass.*



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Nihil Obstat:

J. B. HOGAN.

Imprimatur:

✠ JOANNES JOSEPHUS ARCHIEPISCOPUS,
Bostoniensis.

“If sin is so fatal, and hell is and must be so rigorous, awful, yet in repentance, too, is man purified. Repentance is the grand Christian act, . . . the whole mountain shakes with joy, and a psalm of praise rises when one soul has perfected repentance and got its sin and misery left behind.”
— *Carlyle on Dante's Purgatorio.*

WITH THE LOVE AND THE CONFIDENCE
OF A
CHILD OF MARY
THE AUTHOR DEDICATES HIS CHILD'S-EFFORT
TO
OUR LADY OF MT. CARMEL.

SOUL.

Dear Angel, say,
Why have I now no fear at meeting Him?
Along my earthly life, the thought of death
And judgment was to me most terrible.
I had it aye before me, and I saw
The Judge severe e'en in the Crucifix.
Now that the hour is come, my fear is fled;
And at this balance of my destiny,
Now close upon me, I can forward look
With a serenest joy.

ANGEL.

It is because
Then thou didst fear, that now thou dost not fear.
Thou hast forestalled the agony, and so
For thee the bitterness of death is past.
Also, because already in thy soul
The judgment is begun. That day of doom,
One and the same for the collected world —
That solemn consummation for all flesh,
Is, in the case of each, anticipate
Upon his death; and, as the last great day
In the particular judgment is rehearsed,
So now, too, ere thou comest to the Throne,
A presage falls upon thee, as a ray
Straight from the Judge, expressive of thy lot.
That calm and joy uprising in thy soul
Is first-fruit to thee of thy recompense,
And heaven begun.

— DREAM OF GERONTIUS.

PREFACE.

SCHOOLMEN, in the universities, do a valiant service, standing to the breastworks — first of all, keeping at bay the external enemies of our religion, afterwards winning them over to the standard of the Cross. The present volume, however, is designed for those, *within*. We, the children of Holy Mother Church, need the daily bread of life, with care lest our own souls perish, — not, perhaps, through the enemy's lances directed from without, by a broken faith — but, through neglect of the soul and starvation, within the very walls, by indifference, or a wicked life. If it be observed, that tension marks the speech, the author begs that the season, which inspired the words may hasten to his defence; for, be it understood that Lent is a time when a loud call — ‘sound a trumpet in Sion,’ as the prophet says, — and a persistent one must be employed to stir up the drowsy faithful.

Neither the low whisper of the lyre, nor the delicate note of the lute will pierce the din and tumult of the world's vast machinery and absorbing activities. Loud must sound the bugle's call, for, God's people have wandered afar. This volume, then, is an appeal to the heart; an incentive to action, for ‘cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book, *to do them*.’ — (Gal. iii, 10.) “For the rest, brethren, we pray and beseech you in the Lord Jesus, that as you have received from us

how you *ought* to walk and to please God, so also you *would* walk that you may abound the more.” (I. Thess. iv, 1.)

To insure fair results on all sides, the author strenuously recommends that the eleventh chapter of the volume shall be read throughout, or not at all; for only by a thorough reading of it can the equilibrium of the chapter be adequately conserved and an evenly balanced judgment of the question made possible to the mind of the reader.

The ecclesiastic law has its appointed times of penance. When these terms expire all ecclesiastic obligation subsides with them, whereas the divine *virtue* of penance urges at all times, and at no time wholly ceases.

As, moreover, the book contains the truth, it suits all times, since truth, not being subject to change, owns no seasons. We must be always about the things ‘that are of the Father;’ we must ever be intent upon doing the ‘one thing necessary;’ for, fail in whatsoever else we will, let us, at any cost, save our immortal souls, redeemed by the blood of the Lord. Others may have this world, but give us the next.

HENRY A. BARRY.

Boston, April 1, 1897.

INDEX.

CHAPTER I.

Sinners in Israel, Pardoned yet Punished . . . 13

CHAPTER II.

Sackcloth and Ashes in the Earlier Ages of
Christianity 42

CHAPTER III.

A Study in Penance 80

CHAPTER IV.

The Influence of Penance 108

CHAPTER V.

The Tragedy of Redemption 129

CHAPTER VI.

The Last Farthing 152

CHAPTER VII.

Man's Responsibility for His Sins 172

CHAPTER VIII.

God Wills the Salvation of the Whole World, 186

CHAPTER IX.

Danger of Personal Passiveness in Religion . 202

CHAPTER X.

Many are Called but Few are Chosen . . . 220

CHAPTER XI.

The Number of the Elect 240

CHAPTER XII.

Am I of the Chosen 261



AM I OF THE CHOSEN.

CHAPTER I.

SINNERS IN ISRAEL, PARDONED YET PUNISHED.

“Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” With these words, the Master inaugurates His public ministry: This is the starting point; the first thing to be done: “Unless ye do penance ye shall all perish.” God lays the corner-stone of religion in penance; we hear our Lord telling us, we cannot be saved without it; we hear the voice of the prophet above the fierce winds of the wilderness: “Prepare ye the way of the Lord.” Again we hear it, as the prophet of the wilderness runs along the shores of the seas and the banks of the streams, in a voice, weird, resonant and awful, above the din of splashing torrents and the battle-roar of white-plumed waves: “Do penance! do penance!” Jesus and John preached to Israel; but, now as of yore, the Word of God falls upon men’s ears and dies away, like the waves, leaving us unchanged as the waters after a momentary agitation; and yet, all the time, the wild and mournful wail of the lost souls breaks in upon our pensive moments, and the flames of hell light up our fancy as we read

the awful fate, and hear the warning: "Unless ye do penance ye shall all perish":—ye shall suffer as we; for, this is what it means, not to have done penance—to be consigned to everlasting torments: "Depart from Me ye cursed;" "Unless ye do penance ye shall all perish." Yes, I hear the jeers of the world; I hear their mocking 'Hell!' 'Everlasting fire!'—'pooh!' I hear the taunt: "Ye are deluded," 'morbid in your piety;' and, all this carping is because we strive to gain the kingdom of heaven and are earnest in our endeavor so to do, by attaining to the mastery of our lower nature, and by the living in a manner at once pleasing to God, disastrous to our sensual nature, and disheartening to the enemies of our soul, within and without. Yes, they say, it is well with our nature; it is healthy; nature's antagonism to the soul—a trick of priestcraft! Hell is a bugbear, a mere affair of a beguiled fancy; and to sum up all, — we are saint-mad!

The daily violences, the momentary struggles, the sacrifices essential to salvation, are beyond the capacity for understanding of the carnal world, whose motto with more or less modification is, invariably, and substantially: "*Dum vivimus, vivamus*,"—Whilst we live let us make merry for there is nothing more: Death is the final, deep sleep, whence there is no awakening. Still, for all the world's incredulousness, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence; for, Christ's Word must stand: "Heaven and earth shall pass away but My Word shall not pass away."

Many fail to understand penance in the plan of salvation. So, too, are there men who have no ear for music; they cannot read a simple melody, and a symphony is to them a deep secret. To such unspiritual ears penance means nothing but a discord. They do not catch its tone in the grand harmonious scale of redemption, because they have not the ear. They say, someone is singing out of tune. The world, I repeat, does not understand penance. If you practise it, you must do so, alone. You must not follow the crowd: you must part with the 'many,' who tread the broad way, and take to the brambled 'narrow way,' apart, which only the 'few' know. We all need penance, because we have sinned: "Fast," says the saint with tongue of gold, "because you have sinned." Let him that is without sin cast the first stone at penance. But the genius of Phariseism is not extinct; we find a shade of it in the studied but false gravity of the prick-eared Puritan: the affected, calm, ashen face, and gaunt wasted form, are in our midst — 'whitened sepulchres!' But their outward appearances are the result of the hidden enormities of their hearts, or of the seething ambitions and shocking pride, which, though hidden from themselves, none the less effectually consume them. They seem to have struck the high C of piety, but it is all without. The note is forced and unnatural; the voice is *falsetto*. Within, lie buried their sins, but not destroyed, nor concealed from God's view, though, so, from their own clouded eyes. How

appalling ! Self-pleased, self-distinguished from their fellows, unlike the ‘rest of men,’ they ask : “What have we done ?” and the query rankles in our bosoms and grates on our ears, at the very moment when our eyes are observing the words of St. John : “And if we say we have not sinned we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” At last, then, we seize upon the purpose of St. John and grasp the import of his words, and the kind of men to which he alluded when he spoke these words. He levelled them at the hypocrite, who fancies himself sinless and unsinable.

“Who amongst you shall charge Me with sin ?” Methought the Master alone could own such words ; but, the Pharisee usurps the Master’s words, and asks us confidently what he has done or would have done, or could have done, that he should have to do penance. Perhaps penance is vulgar and only for beginners, not for the advanced class. Let the Pharisee’s own word stand for our verdict on his prodigious temerity : the same words he shall speak later on of the Saviour before the Master’s judges : “The man blasphemeth.” Upon all such as have but once sinned the duty of penance is incumbent. So, then, Lent is meant for you and for me — ‘the rest of men,’ sinners like David and Peter, — thank God, not Pharisees, spin-texts and roundheads, who court the letter of the Gospel, and carry the Bible hanging from their arm-pits ; who shun the spirit of Christ, and to whom the divine and inner meaning of revelation has not been made known, as to the ‘little ones.’

To a sensuous generation the trumpet-flourish of Mother Church, summoning the nations of the world to pause and reflect; her prophetic tongue crying out in the cities, towns, villages and hamlets of Sion, with the solemn authority of Jesus Christ, calling Israel to their tents to fast and pray — to the immoral and unbelieving world, I say, the Church, announcing the approach of Lent, is a herald of tidings that are sad. Memories of fine flavors haunt the palate, and the odors of insipid fish come up to them as the rules of Lent are read out from the pulpit, saddening their poor nature with the idea of sacrifice to their sensuous tastes, and of retrenchments not soothing after a season of revelry and liberty. Thabor is vastly more agreeable than Calvary.

We have enjoyed the delights of the world, and we exclaim, in the spirit of Peter, James and John: "It is good for us to be here." They caught the foregleams of heavenly glory on Thabor; they would fain tarry there and build them tabernacles, and live and serve far from the way of the cross. We, too, have tasted the world's pleasures, though not altogether guilty, and, so, we say, I repeat, 'It is good for us to be here.' We would linger to serve the world in our sensuous ease; but, the Son of Man clothed in glory on Thabor is the Child of Destiny: "This Child is set up for the rise and fall of many in Israel." Signals are already set above the trees at Olivet, on the ramparts and turrets of the distant prætorium, — on Calvary. He, the great Prophet, alone can read them. The

will of the Father beckons Him on. The way of the cross, gloomy and bloody, stretches itself out before Him—"My hour is not yet come"—for glory; "Arise, let us go hence." As He descends Thabor's grassy slope, methinks He renewed His vows: "Behold I come to do Thy will."

Like the youth to whom our Lord laid down the conditions of Christian perfection, men want to be saved; but, grumble over the means of attaining to that happy end; they want to enjoy the promises of Christ, and they haggle over the conditions; they argue on the price. They want to be saved, but they do not want penance. They want the end, but they do not want the means.

God's altars are hung round with sombre draperies; the purple vestments of the priest impress us with the character of the season; the bright colors of the glorified saints, the golden, the white, the purple and the ruby, become obtrusive, and are, for the most part, laid away. The huge black cloud of penance, which extinguishes the lights of the social world, renders the soul in a sense sad and pensive. Some are deaf as the very stones to the summons of the Lord, but the serious soul has opened its ears to the prophet's voice: "Unless ye do penance for your sins ye shall perish all." Do penance, or perish! This is a hard word; but, it is thrice harder to hear the words: "Depart from Me ye cursed into everlasting fire." We must heed the one or the other; we cannot condemn the two. If the soul has heard the prophet's voice; if we are not deaf

to the call of the Lord, we are with Christ in the desert. At length the holy season arrives, the soul has heard the prophet's voice: "Unless ye do penance ye cannot be saved." The sounds of revelry and garrulous wassail, the chitter-chatter, the gossip and brilliant nothings of social events have been hushed; for, it is only by retiring for a time from the noise, the vanity, and revelry of the world, that we may be truly said to be with Christ in a solitude. "I will lead her into the wilderness, and there I shall speak to her heart." The feast of Cana is over, and, alas, there were found more at the festive-board on the wedding day than are found by the Master's side in His agony.

"Solitude," says Lenau, "is the Mother of God in man;" it is the "flight of the alone to the Alone;" "it is the essence of joy in piety," says Plotinus. "But," you say, "you would not have us who are called to live in the world become solitaries?" No, I confess, you are not, indeed, commanded nor asked to abandon the fireside, or office-desk, or sales-counter, to wend your way, apart, to a hermitage on the prairie; or to the mountain-caves of the Rockies or Sierras, like Anthony and Paul, or even to bury yourself in the living tomb of the cloistered monastery, were it even for a few days; though, it would not be incongruous nor unhealthful to observe how silent is the cemetery—that monastery of the dead; how noiseless are its gravelled and unroofed corridors; and how secluded and silent the little cells in the earth where eternity will find us,

willing or no, monks in death,—communing with our God, I hope, but cannot surely say—and, perhaps, regretting our past dislike and disinclination to any portion of true solitude, saying, with the fullest power and deepest sigh of our soul, the words of Augustine: “Lord, how late I have loved Thee.”

The solitude of Lent, for you, shall consist in the substitution of a prevailing spirit of religiousness and more earnest devotion to your eternal interests, for the pleasure-seeking passion that rules your life throughout other seasons; and for your warm pursuit after the pleasures of this world. Yours may be, though a lesser one, still, a solitude, when you shut out from your life dissipations and distractions that hinder the solemn thought that pervades the Church of God when the whole Christian world is in retreat. “Remember, man, for dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.” You will not go into solitude, but you may bring the solitude to you. Say then to all your distracting amusements what the Lord said to His friends, whose talk, harmless at other times, distracts Him now: “Tarry ye here whilst I go yonder and pray.” Under such conditions the heart of God and the heart of man are brought together. God has something to say to each of us when He beckons us, apart, from the dusty highway to the woodland path; He has something to say to us in private: “I will lead her into solitude and there I shall speak to her heart,” says God to the soul. If, indeed, the sun of the

social world is eclipsed, and a midnight silence broods over the carnal world ; if we retire, indeed, from the life that is without to the truer one that is within the soul, by shutting out the external light, we shall see all the better the light that is within. The Holy Spirit will, as it were, overshadow us.

Silence ! solitude ! reflection !—this is not a welcome work for the multitudes. Few men would seize a lantern and walk into a cemetery at dark night, alone, and, entering the lonely tomb, release the rusty, clanking chain from the great, gloomy iron gate, push back its ponderous bolt, and approaching, raise the lid of the casket and behold the white face of the dead man, though it be that of a friend, a brother, or a father. The souls of many men are wrapt in the black folds of a worse than mortal death. What is the white face of the dead man, his hollowed cheeks, from which the skin has receded ; the prominent teeth, and empty eye-wells ? The bodies of so many men as live in sin are but as moving sepulchres : their souls are rigid, cold, and damp in death, within the world's vast charnel-house. Yes, men will find it hard to go into a spirit of reflection, accept the lesser solitude of the mission, and observe the retirement of the Lent. This is going into the grave-yard, entering the tomb, unscrewing and raising the lid of the coffin, and gazing in upon the features of one's own dead soul ; yet, if you will do it, the sight will rouse you from your torpor or death to Christian life and perfection.

It will sanctify you like the crumbling remains of Isabella moved Francis Borgia to love God with all his heart and soul, to the very highest pitch of human endeavor. Meditation and self-examination is a solitude of the soul.

The unbelieving world, I repeat, does not, or affects not to, comprehend penance—‘A morbid doctrine!’ they say; “quite out of tune with all humanity and reason!’ Rabid worldlings and radical naturalists cry out: Suicide! But these men do not take into account the fundamental fact that human nature is fallen and radically out of joint. Yes, alack, the instrument of our poor, frail, delicate nature, fell once from the grasp of Adam and was broken. Christ, Who could alone do it, as being God, has restored the lost chord, and put together the broken pieces and severed parts of the instrument of our nature. Benighted sectarians and wilful agnostics repudiate the new economy of Christ. They have not the true Faith. A chord is wanting to their soul, and their harps cannot interpret the divine harmonies of our venerable religion.

The genius of penance is justice: “Render to God the things that are God’s.” A pious fear of that justice, which should dwell in the hearts of all virtuous men, finds expression in penance; “Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord.” A key to the understanding of penance is found when we shall have grasped the truth that God is just. When offended, the wrath of God is withering as the dry north-wind. “Who knoweth the power of Thy

anger and for Thy fear can number Thy wrath ! ” Keep, then, before your mind’s eye, the word of the Church in her third Nocturn of October : Her apostrophe to God : “ Creator of all things, God terrible and mighty, just and merciful.” If you offend God, fancying He loves you too much to punish ; oh, what an insult to His justice ! Fie ! vapid but perilous fancy : Out upon your modern conceit ! Shame upon your affected humanitarianism ! — He cannot punish ! He will punish ; He must punish. Much indeed as God is merciful, He is still under obligations to His own justice to punish the sinner. His mercy cannot defeat, nor will it try to defeat the hand of justice. Let no man trifle, then, with God, and fancy to himself that he can sin, aye, or take from the forbidden tree one particle of fruit, a bud, a leaf, and say : “ I defy Thy justice ; ” or, “ I challenge Thy mercy ; Thy love will and must withstand Thee and Thy justice ! ” What mad, blasphemous sport it is making with the terrible attributes of the Divinity ; what insolent familiarity and boldness it is to take God so flippantly and trivially ; to harlequin His perfections, and turn the God of truth into a make-off God. “ In whatsoever day thou shalt sin thou shalt die the death.” This vow of satisfaction condemns the dreadful thought that justice will be frustrated by love. God says He will punish sin ; God keeps His promises. We are free as the mountain air to sin or not to sin ; but, if we sin, God will punish us. God is not free not to punish when we shall have sinned.

Let us go to the first vespers of the apostles assigned by the Church for the office of her priests. Psalm cx. speaks the whole truth, clearly, indisputably, and infallibly: "His justice remaineth forever and ever." We pass on and new thoughts arise and occupy us, until we reach Psalm cxi. and lo! again the same words we find in the third verse: "Glory and riches are in His house, and His justice remaineth forever and ever." We read on and in the same psalm we are confronted by testimonies bearing on the wondrous kindness of God to the poor and the lowly; but, lest we forget the previous idea of His justice, or lest it be lost in the medley, or outshone in the group of God's marvellous attributes, of His splendors and munificence, between the praises of His generosity, power, beauty, and the dazzling brilliancy of His glory, the prophet's voice recalls and repeats the terrible truth: "His justice remaineth forever and ever." The justice of God is as old as His love. It shall live as long, unchanging and imperishable. The brilliant pageantry of the divine attributes march before our fancy as David marshals them to the sounds of psalm and timbrel, of psaltery and harp in his inspired muse (Psalm lxxx.) His song now excites us, lifts us up, thrills us with joy and hope, and in a twinkle he touches the chord of justice, — sounds the timbrel, and the ruby color of our hopeful countenance deepens to carnation, and fades away to paleness; a tremulousness comes upon us, a fear creeps over us; the soul is stirred, and vibrates with fear,

when he tells Israel how just God is ; how loving, and yet how terrible !

“Sing we to the Lord a new canticle : because He hath done wonderful things. His right hand hath wrought for Him salvation, and His arm is holy.” Yet under the empire of Jesus Christ, justice must be respected. “The Lord hath made known the salvation, and hath revealed His justice in the sight of the Gentiles.” (Psalm xcvi.) The understanding of penance means a trembling, a fear lest we offend Almighty God, and by our offences bring down upon our heads Divine chastisement to match them. The prophet has it : “The mountains tremble and they smoke in His presence, and the very fibres of the deep quiver and proclaim that the God of Nature is in anger.”

Since the coming of our Lord, Israel sings a new canticle : “Let us praise the Lord because His mercy is brought down upon us ;” but, let us, at our peril, still remember the low, deep tone of the versicle, constant as the swell of the mighty deep : “His justice abideth forever and ever.” In whatsoever accents the Church may sing of hope, of joy, of admiration, beneath every canticle the chord of His justice rolls out for a basis of true harmony. Since the Incarnation of our Divine Lord, Peace and Justice have embraced and kissed ; they are friends. Mercy and Justice are not enemies, and Mercy will never dethrone Justice. Let then the fear of God find always a dwelling with us. Hope in God without fear is spurious virtue. On the other hand, our very

fear must be accompanied and qualified by hope, to be wise and true virtue. Listen to Peter: "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." This was intemperate fear; one which needed a dash of hope; for, so the Master clearly said: "Do not fear," that is, do not fear too much; do not fear without hoping. David, like Peter, felt the burden of his miseries: "My iniquities are gone over my head."—"I am become miserable and am bowed down even to the end."—"I am afflicted and humbled exceedingly."—"I roared with the groanings of my heart." But, after having numbered the vast array of his afflictions, hope still abided with him and never forsook his side. "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped." Forsake me not, O Lord. "From the morning watch even until night, let Israel hope in the Lord." Fear without hope is despair. This was the sin of Judas. He feared God's wrath to be visited down upon his treason. He lost hope in mercy and perished. Fear with hope means salvation, but it is not well to hope at the expense of our fear: "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." In religion, give everything its proper value and just proportion: "No man knoweth whether he be worthy of hatred or love." The angels are not pure in the sight of God. If we were to bring in before the altar to-day the body of a Francis or a Teresa, the minister of God's Church would be constrained to read over it the words of the Church: "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord, for in Thy sight no

man shall be found just." This tremendous word holds for all men. The fierce confession it makes is true. So infinite is the purity and holiness of God that for each offence against that sanctity, justice will insist on the full measure of reparation and atonement: "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" — for murder and the idle word.

Yes, sin is an injustice. "I have acknowledged my sins to Thee and my sin is an injustice." "I have acknowledged my sins to Thee and my injustice I have not concealed." (Psalm xxxi.) "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord hath not imputed sin." But who is such, and where is he, prithee? "No man knows whether he be worthy of hatred or love." Shall you or I say: "I owe nothing to God's justice." Every man who breathes may yet be saved. Fear God's justice now in time. The damned fear it and tremble beneath its wrath, but it is too late to profit them. Fear in time eventuates in hope, and ripens into salvation. The fear of God, from which salvation is born, must in its turn have been born in time. Fear God now; mercy rules to-day. After this life 'justice remains forever and ever.' There is no further mercy once we are lost: "It is decreed for man once to die and after death, judgment." Why go beyond the one fact that hell was created by justice; and if Justice were to take her course untempered by mercy we would, and might well, despair; and, oh, what must be the tortures of hell, where justice is in its full blaze, and whose awful fires shall gleam with a madding constancy.

The thief, the murderer, the incendiary, the harlot, and all such, serve out their full sentence, work out atonement before society, and cancel all indebtedness to the laws of the state; but, the sinner must reckon with a higher justice and a sterner one; a keener and a stricter judge, a higher, a nobler and an eternal law. The sinner must stand before a judge who sees the inward guilt in the piercing rays of His august holiness.

By our voluntary and free choice we may serve out a moral sentence by penance, — less indeed than the smallest fraction of our dues; but, voluntary and sanctioned of God, — and be pardoned of all we owe to God and to the Divine law. What shall it be? Penance, whilst pardon is obtainable; or, shall we serve out in a life without end a sentence hereafter, where pardon is impossible: “Depart from Me ye cursed into everlasting fire.” We may catch a gleam of the wrath of God and snatch a faint idea of the punishment which justice allots to sinners, from the events that took place before the coming of the adorable Victim Whom the Father was to offer up for the sins of the world.

Sad and terrible was the fate of the angels. Gems of dazzling brilliancy set in the crown of God to attest His sovereignty, they fell from their setting, ‘for the mighty are laid waste’ (Zachary ii, 20.) Jewels they are still, but set in the robe of Justice, and it is their very brilliancy that makes hell so brilliant a flame. Mighty intelligences, noblest in character of all God’s creatures, the angels sinned but once. Without pity,

and without offering any opportunity for pardon, God smote them. "He sinned against a God! Who did not call him to repentance," says St. Bonaventure, referring to Lucifer. Lost forever! If the Son of God had offered Himself as a victim for the angels, there would have been hope for them. As it is, our repentance will secure eternal pardon, but only because Christ has died for us. Lost, I say, damned,—the angels! "Proud spirits," says Bossuet, "without losing your sublime intelligence, God has turned it against your own hearts, as an instrument of punishment. Everything bright and glorious in you is transformed into evil. Your intellects that shone like the stars of the morning have become the agents of duplicity and guile."

Brethren, pause and reflect. The example of the angels was wholly lost on Adam. Our universal sire, and root of the whole human family, sinned, likewise, against his God. According to the compact between God and Adam, such an event would be followed by a lasting perdition: "On whatsoever day thou shalt sin thou shalt die the death." The crime of our common father has been condoned and forgiven, but it has not been let go all unpunished. The concerted sorrows of mankind are a portion of the penalty affixed to that sin, and they are a reflection of Adam's own punishment. The insult, I say, has been condoned, but the punishment has been commuted from eternal to temporal punishment; it has not been entirely abrogated. The original sentence,

decreeing lasting death, has been revoked, say rather, compromised; the temporal death stands: "As by one man sin hath entered into the world, and by sin death, so death passed upon all men in whom all have sinned." The mercy of God, beloved by Him, as an attribute of Himself, pleads with soft, motherly face, and moves, indeed, God's justice to relax its awful rigidity. Pardon, I say, ensues;—grace and reconciliation; but Justice has not surrendered all. Our Lord is the embodiment of mercy. He paid the price for us: "You are bought with a great price," says St. Paul.

Freely man erred; freely must he retrieve his error. Justice demands satisfaction of us. Side by side with the redemption in the common misery and pain of humanity, man trudges along bearing his cross, weeping and groaning, rising and falling; an exile, a sufferer, a penitent. No, the life that is 'one grand, sweet song,' is not the Christian life that leads to immortality.—"Blessed are they that mourn." The footprints of the Saviour are not found on beds of flowers; their shapely outline and adorable impression are not discovered on the petals of roses; but on the stubbled heath, and the barnacled rock, and the pebbled shore. Even to-day we are forgiven our sins in the Sacrament of Penance, but it is only with contrition and confession joined to satisfaction that we may profit by this sacrament and have applied to us the merits of Christ's death.

The wrath of God claimed four-and-twenty thousand men of Israel because they had sinned

with the daughters of Moab. Moses was the tongue of God on that occasion, when he cried out: "Let every man kill his neighbors that have been initiated to Beelphegor." (Num. xxv.) Again God was angry because Saul had slain the Gabaonites, to whom friendship had been pledged. His anger put on the form of a famine in the days of David, which lasted three years. Justice did not lose sight of the past sin, as yet unpunished; it clamored for atonement; it was debt as yet unpaid to God. Man forgets, but God remembers. Justice obtained, when the seven survivors of Saul's race were crucified—'and these seven died together on the first days of the harvest, when the barley began to be reaped.' Justice, inexorable, demanded the sacrifice—and, oh, how keen!—at that hour when the song of the harvesters and the music of the scythe made it hard to part with the earth; when the soft croon of the maidens, gathering the sheaves, mingled with the low tones of the sturdy yeomen, beating time with the blade; at the flood-tide of gaiety when Plenty brightened up the scenes of life, and made it hard on them to part with it.

The offense of David in reckoning up the number of His people was one of pride: God refused to let the sin pass unpunished: "I am on every side in a great strait," said the king. Three punishments were left open to him. He could merely choose one of these; but, one of these he must choose. Here we might profit largely by observing the fact that David made acknowl-

edgment of the mercy of God, and threw himself upon it; and, still, God punished him: "It is better for me to fall into the hands of the Lord, for His mercies are many, than into the hands of men," said he. Did this grand piety and most touching submissiveness to God dissuade God from vengeance upon the prophet's sin? No: "So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel, and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men." (I Par. xxi. 14.)

When commanded to smite the rock for water, they smote not once alone, but twice; and because of their incredulous hesitancy, Moses and his brother Aaron were soon made to feel the sting of God's displeasure and chagrin. Both were punished by preclusion from the Promised Land. Aaron, to boot, is unpriested. But why pause to mark the penalty of Moses? Ah, grand and pathetic is the spectacle of the patriarch who faithfully and unerringly had led the children of Israel through many a perilous path from Egyptian bondage to freedom; through the desert of sin and hostile camps, surmounting by his magnificent faith the obstacles flung upon his way by a fickle and seditious people, resignedly beholding the crown of triumph glistening on the temples of another,—Joshua. The venerable liberator stands upon the summit of Mount Nebo, shades his aged eyes with a palsied hand, and views the palm trees nodding in distant Jericho; scans the sky line, focuses the graceful undulations, and moves the eye along, with searching look, the threads of sparkling silver that interlace hill and dell, revealing the

streams of milk and honey that flow through its lovely plains. Why does he not enjoy the triumph of his labors? Why shall he not hear the canticle of joy, the pæan of exultation, sung amid the burning fires, whence fragrant clouds curl heavenward from a thousand altars? Why does he depart from life on the very threshold of his triumph, and his body be suffered to vanish like a phantom with no earthly mourner to shed a tear over his ashes? It is his punishment for one sin. "What," say you, "is such a penalty to many another—as a violent death?" But, considering man's inborn pride, it is easier to die than to see another wear the crown that we have spent our life and best energies in weaving. It is sore trying after our toil of ploughing and sowing and husbanding in the hot summer's sun, to see another step in, when autumn comes, to gather the sheaves and garner the harvest — reaping the glory of our labor. Methinks, the human side of the patriarch would assert itself. I fancy the prophet's noble breast expanding, and his heart rising up in emotion; but, again, I see the piety of the man conquering the rebellious human spirit that was within him: I fancy his swollen heart subsiding, his eyes turning meekly to heaven, his feeble lips moving in blessing, giving thanks to God, and in adoration of the sovereign will. In his punishment and disgrace, he still clings to God with an unmixed love and devotion.

The virtuous life of Moses, with a tracery of his manifold works, as law-maker and liberator of his

people, would stand as a monument, lasting as time and towering high above the souvenirs of saints that have come and gone; but the childlike simplicity and the humble resignation of the valiant leader and holy patriarch surrendering to God the full blazing glory of his earthly triumph, is the golden chapter of his splendid life, and lifts to his memory a shaft of pure white marble, such as we would raise above the ashes of the child, and which tells the simple story—a child is dead! Moses was a prophet, statesman, and patriarch, but what are these gifts save as a means? What are they to that greater gift to which they ought to lead? Ah yes, Moses was above all a child of God,—a saint: “Unless ye be as one of these little ones ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.” It is ever so with saints. We find them simple as children with God and with man. They are not made double by a double world. Always humble, whether in grace or in disgrace; sweetly resigned, and never questioning the decrees, sweet or stern, of Love or Justice. If indeed they have prudence — which the Lord counsels — it is one that finds its root in true wisdom, that does not exclude any love of God, or any fraction of the most glowing charity toward their neighbor. Their love is orderly. It is not for the saint to be industriously astute, the so-called shrewd and worldly-wise. The only suspicion a saint may have is that of his own moral infirmity, or of the devil. “Cleanse your hands ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded.” (St. James iv.)

The sweet simplicity of Moses ! The worldly-wise would say his lot had been a failure : Cruel men would gibe him, as they did Job : Good men would merely pity him ; but the Eternal God loved this simple child of faith. Do we discover by the light of such a noble example in our own lives the punishments for our sins left unatoned and unrepented ? Do not look for these so much in the massacre of the thousands, or in the great catastrophes of life, as in the personal miseries, and hourly contradictions, humiliations, and mis-carriages of your ambitions, and the frustrations of your purposes. Yield your pride before God's design, and your penance will have a true character : " Be afflicted and mourn and weep : let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into sorrow. Be humble in the sight of the Lord and He will exalt you." (St. James iv.) Moses did a great penance.

Distracted with the beauty of a woman, David drew to his sinful bosom Bethsebee, the wife of another. To his sin of lust he added that of murder, when he purposely involved the life of Urias, the woman's lawful husband. The prophet Nathan charges the king with his sin in the charming and touching parable of the ewe-lamb. David then and there makes full confession of his guilt : " I have sinned against the Lord." As is always the case, a frank acknowledgment of our sins, even to ourselves, in the presence of God disposes God toward us. God pardoned David ; — " God hath taken away the sin," answers

Nathan. How then; is all over? No. David is forgiven, through the mercy of God; he is pardoned; but, a temporal punishment remains due to his sin. This penalty David paid in the disgrace brought to his door, somewhat after the fashion of his own sin, by Absalom, his son, who, before all Israel commits shamelessly his deed of lust with the concubine of his royal sire, and supplements his folly by fomenting rebellion against the very throne of his father. God demanded the life of the child which Bethsebee bore to David in atonement for the scandal of his sin. The thirst of Justice was not fully slaked till the temporal punishment of the royal penitent had been rounded off by the assassination of his vagabond son, and the last mourning tear of a father's tortured love had been dried upon his cheek.

In the sixth chapter of Genesis, we find the record of the Deluge. Immense volumes of water were poured upon the earth. How terrible is God's wrath, when we look upon this as a cataract of tears God was shedding for having created the world: "It repented Him that He had made man on the earth, and being touched inwardly with sorrow of heart, He said: I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, even to beasts, from creeping things even to the fowls of the air, for it repenteth Me that I made them." Yes, God looked out upon the corruption of the world and the enormities of human lives, that provoked the deluge of His wrath.

The sins of Sodom and Gomorrha had outgrown patience in the hideousness of their character. The malice of these twin-cities had outrun the natural speed of evil, and they had recourse in their delirium of perverseness to the invention of new fashions in vice, that debased man's very nature. A flood of water will not answer the purpose of God's wrath with such iniquities, adequately. Death by the Deluge had been merely death,—the simple privation of life. Now, a cataract of burning flames, and an avalanche of boiling brimstone, rained down upon the luckless cities, and not a human being, but Lot and his family, who had been warned to seek refuge, nor beast, nor insect, nor flower, survived the awful visitation. Such a death was more than mere death—it was torture whilst dying. But the penalty was commensurate with the ribald and depraved character of the sins that brought it on. Lot's wife looked behind her in her flight from the doomed city. God was displeased with her curiosity and angered by her disobedience. She sinned, and in punishment thereof, God metamorphosed her into a pillar of salt. In the first book of Paralipomenon, a scene is depicted of the children of Israel, wherein they are bearing in reverent and devout procession the ark of God from the house of Aminidab. The ark leaned in the ox-cart upon which it rested, when, Oza put forth his hand to straighten it and was struck dead by the Almighty for his bold zeal, in touching with unpriestly hand the tabernacle of the

Most High. Oza's zeal sprang from his love and devotion, but he practised his piety at the expense of his fear and awe of the Most High. He paid the penalty of his indiscretion.

In punishment of his iniquities, but especially whereas he had committed the folly of consulting a witch, God ended the days of Saul in violence, and passed over his kingdom to David. Deuteronomy is alive with the evidences of both blessings and curses; the former held out to those who shall have observed the precepts and ceremonies; the latter promised with emphasis to those who shall have defied God and disobeyed His laws. The power of a just man to save a city from the hands of an angry God, as in the case of Lot, is not an unmixed source of hope and joy, for God has a corresponding loathing for the wicked man. From, then, the blessings, that God bestows so unsparingly, so unlimitedly, on the just man, we may learn and measure the curses and the punishments He conserves in His bosom for the day of wrath and retribution: "Make haste and be saved there, because I cannot do anything till thou go in thither," said God to Lot.

Indeed, if all the saintly men who now inhabit the earth were to leave it, how long would God endure this world of ours. But, the Church of God must endure till the end of the world, as the Lord promised. The Church must be holy. This is her prerogative, and a mark of her genuineness. Accordingly, holy men must always be, more or less, so that God will preserve the world for the

sake of these ; and yet, how would we have saintly men and women, and how could God bear with the evil of mankind, but for the copious stream of Our Lord's most precious Blood, shed in penance for the world, and daily flowing from our altars from the 'rising of the sun to the setting of the same,' to purify and sanctify these men and women ; and that the sacrifice of the Son assuages and placates the wrath of the Father.

But now, as ever before, penance must be achieved when sin has been committed. The Ninevites accepted their penance and were saved. David fasted for his follies ; and so did all the saints of the old law. How is it with some of us ? When we were youths, brought up in the fear of God, a good conscience, trained in the principles of faith, made us tremble at the shadow of a wrong : We expected a punishment from God for every sin. We had that nice conscience alluded to when the poet said : "Conscience makes cowards of us all." How have you changed in all this ? Have you still those virtuous fears ? Do visions of the Deluge and the fate of Sodom haunt you at night ? Do you not forget your mother's sweet voice when she said, 'God will punish you if you are naughty, my child.' Thank God, we believed her then : would to God we had never shifted our confidence to a false and lying world. When you are before the tabernacle, do you now think of Oza and the ark to inspire you with respect and dread of God's sovereign presence ? Alas, in one word, do you not think

that sin is not so great an evil, is not so displeasing to God, as you thought, and once really knew. Do you not fancy that God does not after all detest and abominate sin; do you not fancy that He will not punish evil now as He once did in the olden days? Ah, no, do not be deluded: God is not yet inured to evil; its character does not diminish in loathsomeness to Him. Man hardens himself to it; man gets inured to it; man grows not to mind it so much; but God, no! God never changes toward it. Is God not as just and holy as of old? "I am the Lord, and I change not." (Mal. iii. 6.) The same God who punished the sinners of old, will punish us. Oh, let us fear His wrath; let us, indeed, understand the awfulness and the majesty of God, and remember faithfully that though He pardons, He must punish every sin committed. Let us realize also that in His sovereign memory no sin evades His eye. I repeat it; that the fear of God and of His justice abide with us! He is indeed merciful and will forgive. But take, brethren, the punishment into your own hands, while there is time: Do penance.

A 'contrite heart He will not despise' and He 'loveth the broken spirit.' Let us then, say, with the prophet: "My God, how dreadful is Thy wrath and who can withstand it;" and the voice of the Lord shall come back from the scenes where once He stood and preached, where once His beautiful, melodious voice floated out above the great thousands who came to drink

from the fountain of His lips the words of eternal life, saying: "Do penance" and "The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

CHAPTER II.

SACKCLOTH AND ASHES IN THE EARLIER AGES OF CHRISTIANITY.

IT has been said that the art of mixing colors is numbered among the lost arts. There is an element wanting to our painters, which they have not yet discovered ; that lies buried in the ages of the past. Like the mummies of Thebes, the art of embalming lies mute with the Egyptians in their sepulchres. There is one element practically lost out of the Christian religion, and yet it is adulteration that explains the failure of modern paint. Nature has not changed. She has her wealth, and yields it always. The elements of Christian sanctity are at hand, as Christ bestowed them on the world as means to reproduce His image in ourselves by the brush of human liberty, and the opportunities for Christian actions offered us daily. One of these elements is wanting in practice to-day, or, is admitted in wholly inadequate proportion : This element is penance. It is not obsolete in the teaching of the Church : the art of holiness is not lost, nor buried with Jesus in the silent tomb : "My Word shall not pass away." He has commissioned masters like Himself, only human, to teach the world in all ages, 'whatsoever He has taught them, to the consummation of the world,' so that the art of sanctity would never

change, like men and manners, and should never be lost; but, as 'many grapple with the Scriptures to their own destruction,' I am helped out by these words in my assertion, namely, that the art of sanctity is practically a lost one. Men adulterate the teachings of Christ, as the Church teaches them, and as preachers preach them. The hearers of the Word modify them to suit their own narrow, false, selfish judgments, and perverse tastes; accordingly, the greater part of the world, when it is a question of mixing the colors, by which Jesus Christ will be reproduced in themselves, either leave out penance wholly, or admit it in the most grudging and merely suggestive quantity. Hence, the horrid idea of our Lord merely as what the world likes to call the gentleman, and not — of necessity — the Adorable Saint that He is, — *Tu solus sanctus*; the kind and gentle in outward manner, and, not of necessity, the fearful, the stern, the self-denying, and crucified Christ, the fasting, thirsting, Saviour, the humbled Lord in the robe of a fool, the Victim slain for the redemption of the world.

If penance has not departed from the religious system in the practice of the many, why do so many begrudge their sympathy, and, oftentimes, withhold it from those orders that are given up to the keen austerities and the sternest monastic rigors? Why does the modern religionist doubt the merit or question the good, or gainsay the usefulness of the Carmelite, the Carthusian, or the Trappist? Of what use, say they, are such men and

women, in such a life? And this question is asked by Catholics; but not without showing grave disrespect for the judgment of our dearest holy Mother Church, who has seen fit and pleased to sanction such. Is it progress to outlive the pious institutions of the Lord? Is it pious to reflect on anything that Holy Church approves? Nay, it is the consummation of effrontery, and a progress that is the direst species of retrogression. Under all this unbelief in rigid self-denial, can we not discern the subterranean idea that penance, as Jesus Christ taught and practised it, is, after all, not necessary to the Christian religion to-day? But, do not, I ask you, such arbitrary judgments array themselves in conflict with the Master, Who inaugurated His teaching with the doctrine of Penance: "Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."—"Unless ye do penance ye shall all perish?"

It would seem, after men had denied penance, that they cared no more, nor desired, any longer, to be saved. But, this is not so; men do wish to be saved; but, men want to be saved in a new way. The old way trodden by Christ and His saints is a hard one. They do not want it, so, men simply repudiate it. Denying facts, however, does not change them: turning one's back upon the truth does not blot it out, nor change it in the least. Like the fool, who said in his heart, 'there is no God,' men, who fancy the idea of penance is not essential to true piety, cannot think as they say; for, reason or revelation must furnish the

material for the foundation of any thought, to be such, and more than a simple fancy. The fool did not demolish God by his denial of His existence. It is simply men's wish not to have penance.

I have said that men 'wish' to be saved. It may safely be disputed, if the disposition that stops at the 'means' may be said to be truly a desire or real 'wish' for an 'end.' I grant that it looks to be hardly more than a name; and yet, though it be but a wish of the 'wish,' it is as such after all, far more than cold indifference to salvation, which argues an absence of hope. It shows the soil is not of rock; that the seed is bursting; and this, in turn, shows some prospect of taking root and further on of ripening.

But the idea of penance is still kept alive, notwithstanding, in our midst, by the lives of revered men and women, such as these, the cloistered virgins of unshod Carmel. Whilst such are with us, we may say that we have a token of the spirit that animated and lighted up the ages past of Christian chivalry; but, beyond the few religious bodies, and especially those of a penitential character; and, above all, a holy and zealous priesthood,—martyrs bearing witness to Christ, not on the arena of blood, but in loneliness, without any sympathy or a word of praise from the world, on the hidden arena, that embraces the confessional,—made perhaps by the priest's own hands,—the homes of the poor and the squalid garret, whither he brings Jesus Christ whilst others sleep, and where poverty, misery, wretchedness

and filth minister to death: beyond, furthermore, the handful of devout and sincere women living poor in the world, in purity and virtue, amid the hardships of the kitchen, the moral perils of the workshop, the counter and the office; and, fewer men,—these for the most part laborers,—yes, beyond the circle of these, the ‘few who are chosen,’ there is as much difference between the Christians of the early days and those of our times, as there is between heaven and earth, the religion of God and that of man, the reality and the sham. These few storm heaven: the multitude have laid down their arms.

The life of Our Lord was ushered in by the shedding of the blood of the Innocents. It ended in His own cruel and violent death. The history of the early Church was written in deeds, not with pen and ink, but with their own fingers, the fingers of heroes dipped in their own blood. Violence, blood, penance,—these make up the vocabulary of Christianity: these tell of war, that should be now, as of yore, when Job pronounced the life of man upon earth to be one of warfare; now, as when the prophet David moaned in confession and prayer the words: “My enemies live and are stronger than I.” Yes, now as then, there is no room for effeminacy in the idea of religious virtue and salvation; no quarters for softness in capturing the kingdom of heaven. The camp and field; the trumpet’s blare, and the bugle’s shrill blast, the din of cannon, the clash of sabres, the scent of powder!—“The kingdom of heaven

suffers violence." Penance, my brethren, penance ! It was in the beginning, it must be now, it shall be always. It is in the lexicon of Christianity, but an asterisk is placed against the word that declares it obsolete, but, I say to you 'an enemy hath done this.' Yes, an enemy it is who has sown cockle with the grain, who has preached a new gospel, different to the one our Lord preached, and His holy Church preaches to-day, but which perverse men will misconstrue. Surely, Gabriel's trumpet sounding the muster from the tomb on Resurrection Day is for soldiers, who have fallen bravely in Christian battle.

We have begun a short review of the past ages ; but we have touched only upon the Old Law, in the conference that has gone before. The New Law awaits our attention. The one Figure, the Ideal Penitent, the Form that stands out above the heroes of the Old and the New Law, in the center, —our Model, our Type, our All, the One Saint—*Tu solus Sanctus* : need I speak His name? No ; but, it is always a new grace to repeat it, it leaves a fragrance on the lips, a sweet taste as of milk and honey on the tongue—Jesus. After our Divine Lord, but infinitely so, the most important personage we have to deal with, logically speaking, is John the Baptist. Bethink you of the character of the Forerunner. This is found, by implication, in his mission, but more directly, in his panegyric, as pronounced by the Master's own blessed tongue. We can have no doubts of the immense sanctity of the Baptist, after Our Lord

has said of him, that a 'greater was not born of woman.' Chosen by God to be the herald of His Son, and to dispose the hearts of the people for the coming of the Redeemer, was this John. He was like the aurora preceding the Great Sun. He was, in accordance with such a destiny endowed, as indeed must needs have been, with tremendous corresponding lights and unusual strength of grace. It is to be remarked how unlike any other saint he was,—forehallowed. When he was born into the world John was no young rebel, as we, at that moment in our life, but fore-freed from all sin, from the state of enmity with God, and blemish. God's Mother was conceived without sin; not so John, however, who, indeed, was not, as she, immaculate in his conception, but, smirched when conceived, as even we, with the slimy touch and taint of the dragon. John was conceived in original sin.—“In sin did my mother conceive me,” as David said; but, whilst yet he lingered in his mother's womb in motionless stillness, as though he were sad, and brooding on his state of sinfulness; and the deadness of sin was on him, God saw fit to purify him by coming near to him when His Mother, Mary, bore Him in her womb on a visit of charity to her cousin Elizabeth. Joy replaced, in an instant, the unborn child's pensive grief, and he grew forthwith nimble of motion, with the weight of sin removed, and bounded with joy for being now in the love and friendship of his God, and holding a right on heaven and glory—redeemed!

Our Lord sanctified John in this remarkable way, because his mission was a special one, namely, that of preparing the world for His own coming. By the imposing figure of the Baptist, the new Elias, the era of redemption opens up. He is to tell the world that if they would receive Jesus Christ they must show certain undoubted qualification and disposition. What is this disposition, this qualification for receiving Jesus Christ? You pause and you gaze about you to find an answer. Don't look around in the world; you will not find it in this age. This qualification we must have, but, alas, we have it not. Are we not treasuring up an immense debt for a future day of reckoning?

The disposition John the Baptist prescribes as indispensable for receiving Christ, and profiting by the Redemption, is penance. Penance was the Baptist's theme, and the whole burden of his mission and message to the world. Penance is the whole lesson of John the Baptist to the world: "Do penance or ye shall all perish." How savagely grand; how grandly savage the Baptist in his garment of skins, emaciated body, reduced from sparse and ill fare, and with strange magnetism, drawing to him by the sheer power of his holiness penitents and disciples galore! This, I say, was his entire mission—"Penance;" this is the cost of discipleship.

Penance is a hard word, but, our religion is not an easy one; for, the man who lives up to its high and heavenly precepts with devotion and constancy to the end, earns a martyr's crown. It is

important to ascertain how we stand toward this virtue, for, if penance is the disposition necessary for receiving Our Lord and so being redeemed, we must preserve this disposition, or part company with God and the fellowship of grace. We have the doctrine that the Baptist preached, and just as he preached it; it is our heritage, it belongs to us; he preached it to us. The Church and the saints have interpreted this doctrine. The Church has her Lent, her Advent, her Quarter-Tenses, and her Vigils. These leave no doubt of her mind on the necessity of penance, in the house of God, and in the lives of the elected. The saints have invariably followed the Baptist to the letter. Their lives show severity of austereness. The Holy Scriptures, diaphanous, on this point, yet so often inculcated by the Church, taught by the interpretations and teachings of her doctors, and illustrated by the practices and lives of her saints; the Holy Scriptures, I say, so interpreted, should be our guide, our teacher, and the mould of our life.

But, is it not, after all, true that, unconsciously, mayhap, for the most part, we are influenced by our surroundings, and shape our life to the pattern of our neighbors? Their life becomes our faith. "*Exemplum trahit*" is an adage applicable alike to good and bad example—"Example is a magnet." If we see our neighbor neglecting his religious duties his indevotion may work and often does work harm upon us, unless we are resolute in following our lawful and infallible guide,—the

Holy Scriptures, as interpreted and taught by the Church, and as practised by the saints whom she approves: "Put not your trust in princes, in the children of men in whom there is no salvation," says the prophet. Because the world, at large, loathes, and will disown the idea and practice of penance, we grow indifferent, by contact with it. We do as they do, whereas, our faith and the laws that should govern our actions, are written out and laid down by Our Lord: "I am the Way." He even hints at this danger of the world's contagion and bad example, and He warns us thereby to be alert, to be watchful, suspicious to detect and quick to shun it: "Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you." It is so with penance, Our Lord lays it down for us. Why will we look about to see if So-and-so admits it or practises it; we know our duty. It is to God. Christ taught it to us; He is our Exemplar: *Tu solus sanctus* — *Tu solus Dominus*. If all our neighbors were to do wrong, we shall find no justification in copying them. We decline to do penance, because our neighbors do no penance; but Christ did His Father's will through every obstacle. Satan offered Him, on the high mountain, every inducement to swerve from the path of duty to His Father, but 'He was obedient unto death,' — "Behold, I come to do Thy will;" 'I have conquered the world,' says Our Lord: we cannot repeat His word. We follow the example of the world, we serve the world, we are the slaves of the world, therefore the world has overcome us

and the world owns us: "Be not overcome by evil," says St. Paul. We do no penance because the world does not do it. The world is deceitful; it follows the maxims of perdition; it promises us happiness if we follow it. Satan pledged to Jesus the universe. Liar, it was not thine to bestow! He is the Prince of this world. Let, my brethren, the world go its way. We owe it nothing; we are fools to pay it tribute. When it molests us, the answer of our blessed Master, before us, will be our answer; when the world says: Put aside penance; when its bad example says: "Follow me," our answer shall be: "The Lord, Thy God, Thou shalt adore, and Him alone shalt thou serve." "Follow me," said Jesus Christ to the accountant Levi. "Follow me," He says to us; not, perhaps, on the highest plane or state of religious perfection, but according to our own state, 'in the path of penance.' "If any man shall come after Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me." Penance is for all.

We may applaud others who are brave in religion; we may praise the saints, and yet, we, ourselves, remain fools,—unless we do penance and merit heaven. There is in many minds a perilous idea that Christ is not so concerned for those in the world as He is for others who wear the religious habit. Salvation is, equally, for all. Christ loves all men. We should all, in religion, and in the world, practise, according to the rule of our state of life, the same zeal for accomplishing the 'one thing' for

which we were brought into this world,—the salvation of our soul. God loves you as He loves His priests and religious. He wishes with the same relative ardor your sanctification and your salvation as He wishes theirs. If you live a life of perfection, in the state in which God has placed you, you have as much right upon the kingdom of heaven as any of the saints. It was to all men, whether in the priesthood or in the religious state, or in the state of matrimony, or in the state of virginity in the world, the Master said: “Be ye holy as your heavenly Father is holy.”

The martyrs were despatched to their deaths: “*Ad Bestias*” was a familiar verdict upon our earlier brethren, delivered, as it always was, in the cold, imperious tone of the Roman dictator and judiciary. “Brethren, you fail to appreciate what it is to die by the beasts,” said St. Cyprian. There is no disputing the test of such an ordeal. There was no deliberation or vacillation. Long before, they had learned their duty, and had resolved upon following it out. When Duty called, they rose up to do her bidding. The world tempted the martyrs. Fortune, position at court, the vision of the white hairs of aged parents, are specimens of obstacles that were flung in their path of duty to Jesus Christ; they, like us, had pledged their word to Jesus Christ in baptism; they went on manfully, led thither by the example of Our Lord, with unfaltering fidelity to their faith in Him. “What dost thou ask of the Church of God?” They answered, as we answer: “Faith.” This

same faith teaches us, it is our duty to dispose our hearts for the coming of Christ by penance. Not "*Ad Bestias*," not 'to the beasts,' for us, but, '*ad pœnitentiam*': do penance, do penance.

It is a fact that if Our Lord were to reappear among us, or a prophet rise up in our midst, the Word of God would not be changed. The doctrine must remain as it is to the end of the world: "Unless ye do penance ye shall all perish;" the voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight His path."

God's eternal Son has come to your hearts. You must put your souls in order, your interior household in readiness, to receive Him. In John's day, few did penance; for, 'Our Lord came unto His own and His own received Him not.' Far beneath the Master's pathetic plaint, that a material roof was denied Him for a shelter,— 'the Son of Man hath not whereon to lay His head,' there is a mystic and a truer grievance, a more bitter, and a sadder complaint: We refuse to do penance, and our hearts are unfit to house the Divine Guest: "My delight is to be with the children of men." We bid Him come in and abide with us, the night. With the pilgrim-disciples of Emmaüs, we tell how 'the night is far on,' and invite Him to tarry with us. Remain with us, Master. Yes, we grow old, the shadows of evening are uniting, deepening to gloom; the kingdom of heaven is nigh—to be lost or gained. But God sees our souls; He sees that we serve another prince; our hearts are bestowed on another, whom, in spite of our prot-

estation, we love more. Our allegiance has been withdrawn from Him, and given over to a usurper's crown. He turns away, sorrow-stricken. What a reproach to the world are those words recording its inhospitableness to Jesus, its ingratitude! There is a terrible sadness in the utterance of the grievance. I fancy how His voice trembled, and His eyes grew moist, as, with emotion, He spoke the word: "The Son of Man hath not whereon to lay His head." The world never wanted Our Lord: it refused Him a place wherein to be born. It still shuts Him out from a home. It is not surprising that, afterward, they got rid of Him. If, indeed, the children of God had done penance, this shame would not to-day stand against them as a handwriting on the wall, which, being interpreted, meant then, what it means now, to us: "Unless ye do penance ye shall all perish."

"He came unto His own,"—you know the story. He comes to us: Is it a different story? Great stones are rolled up against the gates of our hearts. Evil habits,—like giant bowlders, that become part of the very earth itself, and seem inseparable from it,—become, as it were, a second nature, and prevent God's access to our souls. We must call off the obstacles; we must remove our wickedness, and renew our fealty to God in the firm resolve of entering upon a cleaner life. And all this means—penance! We must undo the evil we have done. We may wish, in a way, to receive Our Lord, but, this wish is fruitless and void of efficacy, unless we put our hand to the

obstacles that we have deliberately thrown in His way and remove them from the King's path — 'unless ye do penance ye shall all perish.' God, it is true, will put His Hand to these obstacles to help remove them. We cannot remove them without Him; He will not remove them without us. Sometimes an obstacle, a vice may be done away with by one grand effort of the opposite virtue; more often it is removed like the rock, by the hammer, piece by piece. Penance sounds hard to us. There is no denying, it is not easy, but, it is essential, nevertheless. The Jews passed the same verdict on the Real Presence. When the Master first preached the sublime dogma: "Unless ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood ye shall not have life in you," the Jews said: "This is a hard saying;" aye, but it is a true one,— there's the rub.

In medicine, there are two phases of application, the therapeutic and the prophylactic. The one prevents diseases and the other cures. Mortification, as St. Paul practised it when he said: "I daily chastise my body and reduce it to subjection," is a preventive. Human nature is in a universal state of disease. Disease is its normal state. We must continually be under treatment to prevent: *Vigilate!* Watch out!—cure disease by preventing it. We prevent sin by mortification, and we cure it by penance. Mortification, then, may be said to be a therapeutic penance. Without it,—no mortal excepted,—sin will overcome us. In the mind and heart, ambition and

rebellion lie immortal, as long as we are mortal. The fires of concupiscence are never utterly quenched: We are fastened to the goad of the flesh, like martyrs fastened to the stake, and in its slow and tantalizing fires, deserve the crown. Like the serpent coiled up in silent slumber, these things may not show any activity until late in our life. The demon has waited and watched for this hour, to catch us out of training, and attack us. As the cancer works us harm, muffled in its action; as the sap that flows—noiselessly, the forces of our soul pass out from us leaving us weak before our adversaries. Not to do penance means sure decay: Like the tree that is dead, yet, seems to have life—it rots away inwardly, and falls under the first blow of the axe-man, in pathetic ruin. Beware, then, of the canker-worm: “O, that this good blossom could be kept from cankers!” (Shakespeare ii, Henry IV.)

We had shunned penance, that prevents. Humility, self-denial and suffering had ceased to enter into our religious life; when, now, our concealed passions show themselves, stronger for nursing, and refreshed by slumber, we are not prepared for them,—*vigilate!* “Believe me,” says St. Augustine, “I am a bishop; I do not lie; I have seen the Cedar of Lebanon, and the ram of the flock, fall, in whom I had as much trust as in Gregory and Ambrose.”

We do preach penance. The contagion of religious indifference has nowise affected the zeal of preachers, or dimmed their perceptions

on the score of penance; but somehow, the seed will fall on the rock. Perhaps it is not true to assert that the multitudes throw off their belief in penance. It might be a more skilful diagnosis to pronounce the disease inordinate temporal activity. This embraces two elements; the inordinate taste, and the subject of it. I think our activity, here, in America, amounts to disease. To get on in business, with a view to reaching 'social' standing, is the predominant feature of our national character: it really amounts to a disease. Even here, again, our activity is abnormal, and men are bent upon getting rich in the quickest possible time. Anything that does not arrive at the goal of our ambition, and especially, what, at the same time, it fails of doing this, consumes much time, is simply out of the question. It is getting so into our constitution that we lack, for example, great and finished musicians; for, the children loathe the drudgery of slowly counting the measure of time. The same holds in all other branches of art, where patient labor is essential to perfection. In hotter climates the people are slower. We call them sleepy, but their growth is natural—not forced; ours is development by incubation. Business! Business! Business! This is the familiar cry, heard from East to West. As we live we die—quickly.

The Jews slew Christ, and they are a curse to the world. Their ravenous greed for wealth has, in a way, compelled the rest of the world to look

sharp, or be prepared to find all their possessions in the hands of these gold-worshippers, as is the case, in Austria, to-day, where the Jews have possessed themselves of most of the domains of honored and Catholic noblemen. The Jews are chiefly at the root of this money-madness. They always preferred the golden calf to the Son of God.

The Lenten season is at hand, when we hear sung, in the churches, in deep sepulchral tone, the cry of the prophet: "With desolation is the world made desolate, because there is no one, who thinketh in his heart." How does the world receive the prophetic message? They muse: it takes time; I cannot afford to take one hour from my busy life of the body and the concerns of this world to bestow it on my soul. It takes time! Yes, it takes time from my business! Money-mad, the world will not heed the prophet's voice; it passes on, goes its old way—"Fool! this night thy soul will be demanded of thee." Yes, right in the full bloom of life, in the glamor of human prosperity, in the full flush of social standing, with the most gilded and roseate hopes of a smooth, long and happy life,—aye, in the high noon of his existence, Death knocks at the rich man's door to claim him. He leaves his treasures to ungrateful heirs, who will soon lose sight of his toils; he goes into the grave. Who shall say this is not madness? He had no time for God and his soul, before. He has it now, and where? O God! The word said in kindly warning by

the lips of Christ will be spoken in fiendish irony, in a wild yell, and mockingly—"What doth it profit a man if he gain the world and suffer the loss of his own soul." Ha! Ha!

Do not look around in the world for the qualifications of the kingdom of Christ, unless you draw aside the veil of a monastery, or peer into the lives of those I have indicated above, of Christ-like priests, devout religious, and simple, God-fearing laics. Elsewhere, we will search in vain for lives that reflect the early ages,—such lives as Cyprian, Ignatius, Isidore, and the martyrs lived. Yet, it is essential to us all to save our soul. Notwithstanding the world around us and the divergent spirit of the age, John the Baptist must stand up for our ideal of the qualifications that must be found in the Christian life that is ready for the coming of the Lord. The Baptist is the doctor of penance: He lived like a savage, aloof from men, out in the wilderness. His living consisted of locusts and wild honey. John fled from the world, because the world's touch is pernicious. Penance so raised him up in holiness that men took him to be, indeed, the Christ Himself. His eyes showed the spiritual lustre of his divinely-illuminated and divinely-loving soul,—soft and magnetic, stern, yet pathetic. His words are charged with the influence of his own heart, and the tremendous power of his graces to stir up men to good. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Ere we withdraw our spirit from John the Baptist and his times; before we

cease to commune with this child of the wilderness, let us pray him to teach us the lesson of penance, to obtain for us the grace to mend our cowardice, and the further grace to take on courage for the practice of this virtue the rest of our days.

The next great example of penance is Peter. Apostacy and perjury constitute his two-fold sin. It is clear that Peter looked upon himself in the light of the strongest adherent and most faithful follower of Our Lord. When the Lord had hinted at the possibility of his defection, Peter was manifestly hurt, and, at once, and fervently, resented the Rabbi's impeachment. Yes, sin takes the proud man off his high horse and humbles him to the dust. But Peter's boisterous, conceited and braggart spirit was soon changed when the cock crowed for the third time, and a sense of his horrible guilt shot like a serpent of fire from every avenue of his body, to his heart and to every sense, now burning him with feverishness, and then leaving him cold and clammy and as one bewildered. So, Peter, Apostle of God, now heaven's best grace has come to thee—thou art humbled; melancholy, in the sight of thine own enfeeblement. An apostate! Yes: and afterwards the fountain-head, whence the lambs and sheep of the Lord's flock shall drink in truth, for all time. Wonders of God! This man denied Jesus; he perjured himself. This was his sin. Now his penance. This we find amply in the text: "Peter going forth wept bitterly." He

cried when he realized what he had done. When the Master looked at him, the unfortunate Apostle felt the full weight of his shame, his compunction, and his grief. Yes, those adorable Eyes of Jesus shot darts of fire into Peter's soul : and those were sorrowful Eyes, sad for sin ; and the pale, sad Face imparted Its grief to the fallen Apostle, and with a mystic spell, woven of Its glance, planted with Its sympathy the seed of repentance, and laid in his heart the foundation of an humble and sincere atonement : Peter had imitated the prophet David in his sin ; he imitated his royal predecessor in his atonement : "Every night I will wash my bed." "The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping," said the prophet. "Peter going forth wept bitterly."

What a shock we get at suddenly beholding ourselves as we are—the weak, puny things—the nothings. Peter fancied himself something and someone, but Peter was nothing of himself. He now understands David's wise word, which so many in the world have failed to understand : that 'unless the Lord build the city, they labor in vain that build it.' Houses that God builds never fall ; houses that men build fall. Virtue resting on God alone stands. Virtue that reckons on Self is doomed to catastrophe. It is said, that weeping for his downfall became a life-habit of atonement with St. Peter. St. Jerome says as much, when he tells us, that the Apostle's cheeks were furrowed from his constant weeping. Peter is better remembered by his sin ; he should be equally, if not

better, borne in memory for the speediness and lastingness of his atonement. St. Peter is a model of penance in its character and its extent. We, too, should make our life what the Council of Trent tells us,—one of penance: “If a man has once sinned, his whole life ought not to be considered a whit longer than the due measure of atonement.” If we have sinned like Peter, God will hold us under obligation to make atonement like him.

An Ideal of true repentance is also found in Mary Magdalen. Like Chloris, she so did up her tresses, selected and adjusted her dress and millinery, as to suit the world. Poor thing! she believed the world. Still, woman will continue, I suppose, to be vain, and man will continue to be ungallant, using her vanity for a weapon against her.

Beauty makes woman vain. It endows her with a certain dangerous power to attract the eye. Fatal is the day when she begins to use—say, abuse it. Grace knocks at Magdalen’s heart, the love of Jesus flashes on her soul; she answers the summons; she resolves on a new career; her old tricks and ways, associations and pastimes, finery and dress she at once lays aside. She deploras the past and is determined to redeem it. Penance is the means of atonement, and, bravely she accepts it. It is enough to recall that pathetic scene of holy and earnest passionateness, wherein, the central Figure of our life, the Lord and Master, is seated at the table with His friends, when Mary Magdalen rushes in, at the height of the festivity, and, without courtesy—for she was

fully absorbed in devotion to Christ and forgot for the moment the little proprieties and etiquette of society, — proceeds, with pious abandon, to bathe the feet of her injured Lord in the pool of her tears, and to wipe the soft, milk-white skin with her own hair. Here is penance ! The chief instruments of her offense — her hair and her face, become now the instruments of her atonement. The unguents that had aided and abetted her in her sinful conquests, she brings, in their precious caskets, and without stint, pours them on the delicate feet of the Master. The passion, with which she seeks Jesus, outpasses, in earnestness as well as in character, the passion she had so extravagantly poured out, in her past life, on creatures. Our Lord forgives her, and proclaims, before all, the reality of her love, above even that of those about Him ; commends it, and assures Magdalen of the forgiveness of her sin. I need not say how long or how ardently she did penance. The empty sepulchre, if it had voice, could tell, before which she wept in unconsolable grief for the Saviour, on Easter morn. The angel who witnessed her terrible emotion, or the Lord Himself, Who saw all, and so affectionately addressed her as one near to Him — Mary ! None else may know it fully. This episode thrills us to the heart roots ; it lays bare the Heart of Jesus. Turning from the picture, we say to ourselves : there is but one Jesus ! No human being can ever be so sweet and so merciful as He *Tu solus Jesus !*

Set the two, side by side, for comparison: the life of the early Christians and that of our day, and the conclusion forces itself upon us that there is an abuse of mercy, in our day. The sins of our earlier brethren were not frequent. Piety was at a white heat. The terrors of the temporal punishments, embodied in the satisfactions inspired by the Church, held them within bounds of a healthy fear. Tertullian gives us the motive of these satisfactions. "Without fear," says he, "there is no correction, and without correction there will be no penance."

The history of the Church in its system of penance may be divided into four periods. The first stretches from the beginning to St. Cyprian, covering two hundred and fifty years, during which we may well believe that penances, put upon sin, were consistent, in rigor, with the demands of the times. Then, follow what are called the four degrees of 'Canonical Penance,' lasting up to the eighth century. The third period extends from the eighth to the eleventh century, during which a change had come about; and the fourth, from the eleventh century to the Council of Trent, when the old Canonical Penances were wholly abolished and it was left to the judgment of each individual confessor to determine and lay on the penances, decided by him as proper and salutary—not, indeed, a false pretense, nor yet an infliction that would prove inexpedient. In the first period, the penances were worthy of the name, and smarted; but it remained for the two

hundred and fiftieth year of the Christian era to offer us a full view, and a thorough insight into the idea the Church of God entertained and inspired into the faithful, on the justice and holiness of the Almighty. There were, in the year 250, Canonical Penances. It is generally supposed that the Canonical Penances were not established until that time. St. Cyprian was very slow, in admitting to absolution any person who had fallen away from the Faith. His course occasioned some discussion. There were some half dozen, Novatus and others — malcontents, who bore dislike to Cyprian, and, using it as a mask, bitterly opposed him in this discipline. They affected to argue that the saint, in his sledge-hammer scheme, so to speak, was too severe upon those who, in an unfortunate moment, had failed of confessing Jesus Christ, in the face of persecution, when summoned to confess His holy Name. It is true, St. Cyprian was, seemingly, rigorous; but, one has merely to cast a glance at the condition of times and affairs that then prevailed, to no longer dispute the real wisdom of St. Cyprian's judgment. The Faith of Jesus Christ, fresh from the Hand of God, was in its weak infancy. Its growth was possible, but, only, — God so willing, — by the most unflinching courage to be displayed by her children, and the willing and abundant sacrifice of their blood. It was a time when the Church, like a young combatant, first stepped forward to engage her triple adversary, and she must now deserve respect as an adversary, and merit attention. The

effect of her teaching, and the influence of her grace over every earthly tie and human feeling, the reality of the firm, bright hope in the future life, made certain in the promises of Jesus of a joy perpetual, hereafter, to compensate for that free surrender which He now demands of them of the things of this world, by a cheerful and bloody death — all this was necessary, then. The blood of Christians was, in God's design, to be 'the seed of Christianity,' and so, defection from the Faith, in those days, and under those conditions, was punished by the greatest difficulty in getting back to the Church. In this way, it was purposed to obviate defections and back-sliding, and so save many souls, preserving them against the denial of their Faith, by the vision of severe temporal chastisements. Accordingly, the laws were made rigid to meet a sublime and solemn emergency. It has succeeded well — as the Church in all things must.

The lives of our first brethren are our precious inheritance; their courage and faith, our treasure-house of help and inspiration: their memory should be kept vivid in our minds, and sweet to our hearts and tongues. They built up the Church. We are contented to build only in stone. They built the real, the inner Church; we, the outer: but, God wills us to build the two.

During the reign of the Canonical Penances, there were three sins that were never wholly reconciled, when once committed and publicly known. Idolatry, adultery and homicide were the sins.

The guilty were not allowed to make gifts — ‘*offertorium*,’ or to consort with the faithful. In this way, the discipline of the Church impressed on the believers in Christ the fact that Christianity was a pearl, that must not be cast to the swine; that it is a high, noble, and chivalric fealty, and that we must prove our allegiance to our King by noble and courageous deeds. The breast of Mother Church gives suck to brave hearts: she blushes for cowards.

There were four degrees of Canonical Penance. The first degree took in the ‘weepers’: It was their duty to cry aloud for their sins. These were not allowed to have any public prayer said over them; they knelt and begged God for mercy; they wore a hair cloth, and were bespread with ashes. This ordeal lasted from one to five years, according to the sin. To enter the churches of those days — much after the fashion of St. Peter’s and St. Sylvester’s in Rome to-day — we pass from the highway under an arch to a courtyard beyond, and there, in the middle, a fountain stands, where the faithful of the Lord wash their faces and hands for the worship of the Clean Oblation. Leaving the courtyard, and its fountain behind us, we move on and enter the vestibule of the church — which was larger then than in our day — and we press on, still further, to the church proper, where the pulpit stands, in the center, from which the bishops and priests expound the glorious beliefs of Christianity to the brethren, and exhort the faithful to confess their Lord and

Master, in the glare of fire, and in the very jaws of hungry lions. The 'weepers' remained outside, in the open air, prostrate or kneeling, fertilizing their petitions with tears and lamentations for mercy.

It reads like a romance, — the history of those early days, — but this is because the earlier brethren understood what it meant to offend God. Alas, many of us do not. O God, is it not true, that in the case of many of us, the grand inheritance of a faith founded and nursed in blood, is cast to the very dogs. We stand unimpressed by its loftiness and dignity, and senseless to its beauty. Yes, we seem like a temple in ruins, like a fallen race; or, again, as we have said, a masterpiece of finest statuary minus an arm, a leg, an eye, or other member or feature — disfigured, as dug up out of the heap of ruins of the past ages. Yet, the Church is the same. Saints are in her as of yore; only, the scene of their triumphs is not any longer so accessible to the public gaze. 'Tis hidden, and yet for the chosen of to-day, the Christian life is as truly so as the sacrifice of the olden days, but restricted to those 'few' who do all that the Church of God demands of them for their sanctification. Formerly it was a *regime* of blood; now the enemy of our souls has contrived a new stratagem against the kingdom of God, or rather, revived the old one; since Herod had the fool's wrap folded around the Eternal Son of Wisdom Himself. We are called fools for the sake of Christ. We are called

pitiable dupes. This, I say, is Herod's ruse — not so new after all! Some can bear up under most other trials, but quake under the derision of the so-called intellectual world, and desert their colors, or diminish their devotion to Christ, because as the so-called intellectual world has it: Catholic Faith congests the mind, contracts human liberty, and does such like unsober things. As the Catholic passes along the public highway, and, very especially, if that Catholic happens to be the priest, who wears the glorious mark of his divine and solemn office, the stares and signs of contempt or pity, or antagonism harass or try the heart. Feelings of resentment and kindred emotions will make their appearance within us, but we must bear with all this in charity and patience, as the early Christian martyrs of the Faith went to their arena, — for Christ's blessed sake. The martyrs of the past did not draw their weapons to defend their Faith or themselves: like the lamb led to the slaughter who opened not its mouth, they were silent: so must we be silent. The sword of steel is not drawn against us, but a sword of mockery, contempt and social antagonism. "Put up thy sword," said Christ to Peter. We must not resent these affronts, so eloquent, though unspoken, and the deeper for being unspoken. Our sword must sleep on, in its scabbard: — "He that is patient," says St. Augustine, "conquers: he that is impatient is overcome."

The second degree of Canonical Penance took in the 'hearers.' Their place was in the vestibule

of the church, and their function, to listen to the instructions on the laws and commandments they had broken. If they had not truly known the law they yet truly needed enlightenment; and if they wantonly despised the law, they must be humbled. During all the time of this degree, the penitent was kept under the severest laws of fasting; he was prohibited entering the church, and was compelled to remain, without, unabsolved. This ordeal covered a period of not less than one, nor more than five years, ordinarily. The third degree allowed the penitents to enter the church and to advance as far as the rostrum or pulpit, where the deacon read the gospel. Here for the first time the Church allowed public prayers to be read over them. At the gospel they were sent out as being yet unworthy to assist at the Holy Sacrifice. Penitents of the fourth degree were called 'consistents.' These were brought in, between the pulpit and chancel. Prostrate during the service, they were not suffered to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, for a length of time, according to the character of their sins, and the judgment and the prudence of the bishop. On the completion of this degree, the penitent set off his career of atonement by confessing publicly his sin, and as publicly receiving absolution from the bishop.

Looking back into these earlier ages, we are touched, and even thrilled, by the counter-strategy of the Church to offset the tremendous odds pitted against her—social honors, military glory,

fortune, power, pleasure, the blazing effulgence of vast imperial Rome. The faithful must be true to the laws, now, above all other times. How deep, how mysterious, how fearfully beautiful this strategy! — victory by blood and slaughter, wherein the slaughtered are the victors. Yes, persecution and violence are as breath to the nostrils of the Church: “Unless ye drink the Blood of the Son of Man ye shall not have life in you.” The Blood of Our Lord was created to be poured out to bless and sanctify, and, in so doing, enable us to have the Christian courage to be faithful to Him, and, if need be, pour out our own blood to confess His Name; ‘for the disciple is not greater than the Master.’ The faithful lived in those days to Christianize the world; those were days of Christian apostleship, when the lives of God’s children were destined to exhibit a standard of the influence of Christianity on morals, so that Cyprian and Tertullian and other apologists could point to the lives of Christian men and exclaim, before the pagans: “Behold the meaning of our religion!” It was essential, in those days, and the discipline of the Church was most wise and becoming — as it always is — and suited to the exigencies of the hour.

The discipline of Canonical Penance lasted, unmildened, for eight hundred years. Christians could not soon forget the discipline of penance to which an apostate was subjected. Apart from its intrinsic heinousness and shame, — for it is a most ignominious, horrible, and all but unpardon-

able guilt, to deny the Master, — we must bear in mind, it was a common occurrence for Christians to be brought before their cruel judges and ruthless butchers. Confession of Christ meant death. There were a few faint hearts, in those days, but the most of our early brothers met their bloody fate with a calm resignation, aye, a ripple of joy, and the soft smile of expectant love and hallowed peace. It has been said that in the first four hundred years there were eleven millions put to death for confessing Jesus Christ.

The apostate was put on bread and water for ten years: For homicide, Communion was denied up to the death-bed; for drunkenness, a fast, for a greater or lesser period, on bread and water. So, throughout, there were penances to meet every emergency of the Church, thus, surrounding her by a high, strong, deep wall of discipline, that would leave no vulnerable spot for the shafts of the enemy, whilst it kept the soldiers of Jesus Christ safe within the breastworks. The same Church, the same God, the same law! but we are not the same. Christ has not changed, the Gospel has not changed; the guilt of sin is the same now, as then. Perchance, you fancy, because these penances were so rigid, there must have been dispensations, or a loose application of the law; that, in the matter of Canonical Penances, the bark of the Church was worse than her bite. To meet this suspicion we may with profit select a few specimens from among the penitents of earlier days, who, by reason of their dignity,

might be esteemed the most likely to enjoy any concession of the law.

In the time of the Emperor Theodosius, in the city of Thessalonica, during the days of St. Ambrose, a revolt of the people occurred. In the fervor of his indignation, the emperor commanded the slaughter of all the inhabitants of the seditious city, without discrimination. The soldiers came upon the Thessalonians in the midst of a feast, in the public square. Men, women, and children, independent of character, birth, or fortune, were put to the sword, to the number of eight thousand souls. Now, the emperor, in due course of time, came to Milan and proceeded, at the usual time, to the church, to assist at the divine offices. Ambrose, the fearless prelate, and wise shepherd, stood in waiting for him, at the door of the church. Theodosius had shed innocent blood in a paroxysm of temper. Ambrose grasped the situation, and was resolved that an awful scandal should be repaired by whomso it were given; aye, though that one were a monarch. The two met in the vestibule of the church. Ambrose bade the emperor withdraw from the temple of God and do penance for his dreadful sin. The sin he had committed cried out for penance to the Church for the scandal of it; now, he must go, and render himself by his humble atonement worthy to assist anew with unbloody hands at the Holy Oblation. "Go hence and do not add a new sin to those you have already committed," said St. Ambrose. The emperor was humbled;

the self-confusion of the monarch might have more than cancelled his error, in the sight of God. A modern king might have defied his religious superior: aye, has not a Catholic monarch confiscated the very property of the religion, and turned her convents and her schools into mercantile offices and military barracks, and snapped his fingers at the venerable Pontiff who presides over the Church of God, in defiance of God and the Pope's apostolic power? If the monarch of to-day and his menial ministers, who stand excommunicated from the Church of Jesus Christ, would come and humble themselves and repair the scandal which they have given to the whole world, they would show some of the faith and the piety of a Theodosius. But the world does not expect this phenomenon in Italy, where the subjects of a sacrilegious monarch love their king more than their God, — "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." "Father Ambrose," said the emperor meekly, "David sinned and was pardoned." The prelate was equal to the king: "You have imitated David in his sin, go now and imitate him in his penance." For eight months, enveloped in sackcloth and besmeared with ashes, subsisting on bread and water, in utter seclusion, denying himself to everyone, the kingly penitent satisfied the Church of God for his sin and repaired the scandal he had given. At the expiration of eight months, he came to the church, but was obliged, before he could receive Communion,

to prostrate himself on the ground, and to confess that he had been guilty of innocent blood. What, if any ruler of our day were to be put to this test, or any subject of holy Church? Yet, behold the edifying spectacle of this royal penitent and splendid character, prostrated in the company of his fellow-sinners, rich and poor, asking, before all, pardon of God, of the bishop, of the priests, and of the whole Christian world. He did his penance, and was received back into the Church and her communion, when St. Ambrose gave him public absolution.

Fabiola was of high degree: a rupture in the conjugal relation came about by adultery. Ill advised, she hearkened to false friends, and entered wedlock anew, or affected so to do, during the lifetime of her divorced spouse. When the latter died, remorse came to her through the grace of God. She, a woman of high rank, had scandalized the faithful. She did a public penance to expiate the wrong. St. Jerome has written her epitaph: "In view of the whole city of Rome, she took her place among the penitents, on the vigil of Easter, in the church of St. John Lateran. The bishop, priests and people joined in a fellowship of tears. Her face and hands and neck were besmeared with ashes." (Ep. 30.) There the fair sinner bent her lithe body low in compunction; in sorrow, silent, and too deep for any other utterance but the sigh that made its forced escape, and which expressed the overwhelming force of her grief; a sorrow so great that, if it had not found an outlet,

must burst the bands that contain and hold together the reservoir of her heart. There are sorrows that can kill, but God does not ask so much from us.

St. Ambrose wrote to a female penitent as follows: "Shear the locks that have been the source of so much vanity and the occasion of thy fall. Let thine eyes, that, heretofore, have looked upon evil things, turn, henceforth, into fountains, whence streams of tears shall flow. Let thy face, for whose beauty thou hast cherished a shameless passion, turn to paleness and emaciation. By word, by punishment, and fasting; by every way afflict thy body, in whose natural grace and fairness thou hast indulged thyself in empty complacency; scatter ashes over it, wrap it up in haircloth, and thus endeavor to awaken in thyself a horror of sin forevermore."

Christian apologists could once stand up before emperors and judges, and with a holy pride and a calm, buoyant confidence, point to the morals of the Christian family, as an irrefutable argument of defence. Tertullian, Justin, and the rest, could, in a thrill of eloquent enthusiasm, challenge the pagans to dredge the records of the courts to discover a Christian name entered upon the roll of criminals and law-breakers. Purity of morals, justice, charity, regard for the life of one's fellows, respect for woman and her dignity, sobriety in all things—these form our glorious heritage from Christ, and a distinguishing mark of true piety. Consult our criminal records to-day: go, in person,

and question the prisoners themselves, or attend the religious offices, to know the truth; and, be prepared to feel ashamed of the numbers of our own people confined within prison-walls. Wherefore this change from the glories of the past to the shame of the present? Verily, we have not built after God's design. The corner-stone of our personal piety has been removed. Sacrifice that costs us one farthing's-worth of human pleasure we will not have. It matters not to us, seemingly, how great the price which the Redeemer of the world paid down for our redemption. We want no sacrifice,—that free and noble tribute of a soul's love; we repudiate even our obligations to God's justice; we refuse to satisfy for our sins, and to atone for the wrongs we have done Him. We want no penance; we want none of God's love; we give Him none of ours. We want less of His justice, we give Him no justice. And all this goes on in spite of the words: "Render to God the things that are God's." What then? yes, brethren, what then do we want? What, indeed, can we expect? The world wants its own way and will have its own pleasures—the pleasures of the wine-cup, and of the flesh, the fascination of the sceptre, and the drunkenness of fame. It will not give up the smallest fraction of these things. Then the world may expect to perish.

"Do penance for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "My kingdom for a horse;" shouted the monarch of old. "My kingdom for penance," says Jesus Christ. Christ's Word is the law, the

compact, the promise, and the guarantee that, with penance, we shall be saved ; and it registers a vow that, without it, we must be lost for all eternity : "Unless ye do penance ye shall perish." Brethren, the rest lies with ourselves ; in God's name let us do penance.

CHAPTER III.

A STUDY IN PENANCE.

WE do not have to strain our eyes to make observation of the mutual likeness in outline and development in the spiritual and physical worlds. Our Lord, in His plan for the sanctification of mankind, shows us these corresponding relations in the two orders, the natural and the supernatural. Penance fills, in the spiritual life, the department occupied by medicine in the natural life of man. We might, then, classify penance under the heading of the medical department of religion. In the pulpit, the priest of God is the teacher. In the sick chamber he is the father to cheer and comfort. He is so at the altar table where he breaks the Bread of Life to his children. In the tribunal of penance, he is confessor—that is to say, by excellence, the physician. Penance looks after the weaknesses and diseases that harass the human soul. After we are born we have to grow. There are joints to be welded, limbs to be fastened more securely on their hinges, muscular tendons to be developed in order to meet the exigencies of the general growth of the body. We are bound, in the meantime, from the very beginning, and throughout its existence, to nourish the body. But sometimes we have bad health, or, at all events, an occasional indisposition will overtake

us. We need a curative; we need physicians. We need those men who apply themselves to a professional knowledge and insight into the human frame, who will search out the why and wherefore of its weaknesses, and who, by an earnest, assiduous study of the natural elements or physics, and by winning a mastery of the principles of treatment laid down by the great physicists, who are the fathers of natural science, will find readily the most assured treatment, and will be able accordingly to give us the advantage of the speediest and best cure for our disease.

The fac simile of this design and law obtains, and is duplicated, in the department of penance, in the great system of the spiritual world. We are born into the supernatural life at baptism: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." We grow until our limbs are knitted: this is being strengthened by confirmation, when we shall be said to have come into spiritual manhood that will enable us with its hardiness, its prowess, and its endurance, to step into the field of battle to fight and endure the hardships of war: "The life of man upon earth is a warfare," says Job. This is the development—the filling out or growth of the soul.

We have to minister food to the spiritual entity, also, or it will die out by starvation, just as the physical body when left without food must release its grip upon life. St. Paul has said: "As many of you as are baptized in Christ have

put on Christ:" The Lord's words work out the development: "Unless ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood ye shall not have life in you."

Men do, indeed, get amazed at their weaknesses, and grumble over what physicians would designate by the name of general debility. They wonder at their inability to engage with the enemy of the soul, in the temptations of life. The shame consequent upon their numerous falls stings them; but, disaster, shame and ruin are only logical in such cases. These same men shun the Communion Table, as if the Blood of the Lord were the very antithesis of life, and not, as it is, in reality, the very Source of life and strength. Such men would never dream of denying their bodies food, but they persistently forget that the soul as well, stands in need of constant and proper nourishment. Can the hungry and emaciated beggar fight? Could we expect an army of starved men to shoulder muskets and go to the front? Can, then, the soul, weak, aye, dead from starvation, engage in a conflict of salvation? But sometimes we fall sick, and disease brings in its train manifold infirmities, visible and invisible consequences. Now the sacrament of penance comes forward with divine authority and skill to meet the fullest requirements of our soul, and in response to every emergency, lays at our feet the cure of all our moral diseases. Fortunately for us, the scope of the sacrament is so broad; thank God! it is so

universal ; for, alas, various and multiple are the diseases that vex the welfare of, and so often promise to undermine, the eternal health of many of the human family.

We find two words that convey to us the fullest and strongest light on the true and inward character and meaning of penance. The first is *medicine*, the second *chastisement*. One of these words will not suffice of itself to express in full the character of penance: the two must be joined. All that the wise and holy have told us on the subject may be traced down to this dual root. The two, each distinct in itself, like two sides of a hawser, slant upward and meet to form support for the plank of penance, in the religious system upon which the sick soul reclines for treatment. We are not to consider now the subject of penance as the fourth sacrament, nor as the third and integral part of the sacrament; yet, in passing, it might aid us if we remark here that the Council of Trent has said in a decree that, 'for those who fall into sin after their baptism, the sacrament of penance is as necessary as baptism itself is for those who have not as yet been baptized.' I take penance at this moment rather in the sense of a practical spirit, or, as the exercise of the virtue of penance. As I take it, penance must not be a thing that stands, apart, aloof from us, and independent—transitory; something appointed, as it were, for a certain day or hour, and ended for the time being; but, rather, as a part of our very selves, and a spirit that

never dies but is always acting. It must permeate us, influence us, overshadow our deliberations and the debates that go on in the inner soul, influencing our judgments, bearing distinctly upon our decisions. It must so be part of us, or rather one with us, that we shall not be under any constraint of having to pause and ruminate to find or recall it. It must form, as it were, the very tissue of our nature, which we have from, in, and through Christ. We must absorb the spirit, as St. Paul absorbed all the virtues of the Christian life: "I no longer live, but Jesus Christ liveth in me." It must furnish the touchstone of the Christian instincts, if I may so speak, and the motive power of our higher impulses, which we conceive of, in and for God. In one word, penance should enter into the very pith and marrow of our character. Virtues are like instincts in a way. They are inclinations, as by their force we lean toward the subject of them and are urged forward to embrace them; and instincts spring from our character and nature. The divine principle within us, "Jesus Christ liveth in me," is the center of gravity. The laws of faith govern our character, and these are the laws of the soul's gravity, drawing all things to God. Instinctively, we compute, measure, and weigh things by this standard—the more readily as the faith is cultivated in us.

The sacrament of penance is a single act. The virtue of penance is a habit, flowing out of our character, and an instinct, as it were, of the soul

by which man is inclined, and we may say has impulses, heaven-born, to sorrow and atonement, and hope of mercy. No one dreams of contradicting the distinctness of the supernatural life of faith from the character of our natures, pure and simple. Perhaps I need not say that when I speak of impulses and instincts in the things supernatural, I had better speak of them as breathings of the divine breath of God upon the soul—as inspirations and graces. As Christians, we have a character of faith, and as sinners we ought to have the character of being conscious that we are such: the ever-abiding realization that we are sinners.—This is the key to penance as a virtue. Only Jesus may say: “Which of you will charge Me with sin?” Even the priests of God at the Mass to-day, in unison with the long line of saints who have preceded them, all say it: Leo XIII. beats his breast like the least amongst us, and in a penitential, humble voice, says it: *‘Nobis quoque peccatoribus:’* ‘and to us sinners, Thy servants, who hope in the multitude of Thy mercies, vouchsafe to grant a part and fellowship with the holy Apostles and the rest, through Christ, Our Lord.’ I repeat it, that we are sinners. “It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners of whom I am the chief,” says St. Paul. Hence, the great things borne by him,—shipwreck, hunger, nakedness, the prison cell. To have spoken the truth as ‘chief of sinners,’ he must be chief of penitents.

So he was; for, he himself confessed that he suffered 'more than all the Apostles.' Here we find in St. Paul the due proportion to be observed between sin and atonement.

Penance springs from the idea of sin, and the spirit of penance proceeds as from a root out of the consciousness that we are sinners. If St. Paul had not really felt that he was the great sinner he confessed himself to have been; if he had not had in reality that consciousness of his being a sinner, he might have complained of his great sufferings, as he had complained to the Lord of his temptations.

Man has reason; he is said to have a rational character: This is something distinctive; a line of demarkation in entity. We have reason: The brutes have not; and because they are not endowed with reason, we say, it is our *character* as being distinguished from the lower animal order, that we are rational beings. "We ought to labor strenuously to attain to the interior peace of the heart which we call a virtue," says the Catechism of Trent. This virtue of penance consists in turning to God sincerely, and from the heart, and in hating and detesting our past transgressions with a firm resolution of amendment of life and hope to obtain pardon through the mercy of God. We should all have the *character* of penance. "Why do you fast?" asks St. Chrysostom. "Because you have sinned," is his answer. Yes, we are sinners. We ought to feel this at every instant of our life. It should, I say,

be so a part of our *character*, that in all the events of our life it will enter into the very motive of our actions—that we are sinners. If we would throw open the gates of the mind and be convinced of this truth, then the prescriptions of our Great Physician could be easily divined by us—yes, easily read, though written out in characters, that to the otherwise untrained and unchemical eye seem but a fantastical, incongruous and grotesque pot-pourri of chance and meaningless events, in our life. If, indeed, we would only realize that we are sinners, we would, with more zeal, and less reluctance, drain off the draught which God compounds for us out of the pains, the discomforts and the humiliations of our daily life, and which is empowered to work our healing, to restore to us the health undermined by sin, as well as to satisfy the claims which justice has upon us. But, alas, we misconstrue the blessings of God. As it is with all medicines, no one indulges in them for the mere pleasure, and until we are made sensible of our needs, and that they will confer a good upon us, we will keep medicines sedulously under lock and key, so no one does penance for the mere pleasure of the thing. Only our needs can ever move us on to do it; and oh, can anyone say that he is ever for one day dispensed from it? “If a man has once sinned he ought to do penance all the rest of his life.” To have but once sinned, and we have earned for ourselves the humiliating title of *sinner*. I have sinned, say I to myself, and now

I must be punished; I must do penance; I must take medicine. The thought tracks me to the grave.

Let us point the camera toward the Councils and the Fathers. Ever our guides, these shall keep our feet from falling into error. The elements that enter into the woof of penance as a virtue, or as the cause of a virtue, are unwound as follows: "The mercy of God, first prevents us and converts our hearts to Him; illuminated by the celestial light, the soul next tends to God by faith: A salutary fear of God's judgments follows, and the soul contemplating the punishments that await sin, is recalled from the paths of vice. We are animated with a hope of obtaining mercy from God, and cheered by this hope we resolve on a change of life. Lastly, our hearts are inflamed by charity, and hence we conceive that filial fear which a dutiful and ingenious child experiences toward a parent." Thus speaks the Catechism of Trent. These are indeed steps, but when we shall have mounted them we shall only then observe from our new position that penance must embrace punishment or satisfaction. Penance differs from satisfaction, pure and simple; for penance, as a virtue, is a voluntary punishment inflicted on one's self, and is equivalent to satisfaction, but it is more than mere satisfaction: It is medicine.

I repeat: we are sinners. I say that we must punish ourselves. "Penance," says St. Augustine, "draws its name from punishment, because the

soul is, thereby, tortured, and the flesh put to death." "In penance," says the saint again, "everyone should be wise enough to exercise due severity, so that after he has been judged by himself, he will not have to be judged by God." (St. Paul, Cor. xi. 31.) St. Thomas makes the following assertion: "Penance, as a peculiar and particular virtue, means necessarily a punishment — of the sinner."

Among the pagans, penance as a satisfaction was not unknown. Before the sweet face of Our Lord looked out upon the hills and valleys of earth, there had been indeed wise men or philosophers, as they were called, who comprehended the justice of this idea of penance to a marked extent in sympathy with the theology of Rome. St. Thomas builds as much, and as far as possible on a foundation of nature. A man might indeed argue his unbelief in Christ; he can deny revealed doctrines, but he cannot repudiate reason. He may not wish to be a Christian. Alas, he fancies it to be no shame to vaunt that he is not a follower of Christ. But this same man would be consumed in the furnace of his blushes if one were to cast any aspersion on his reason. At any cost, and in the face of any consequences, he will not gainsay reason. Of course this adhesion to reason, and fidelity to its consequences, does not apply to all men, for there are religious fanatics, who are, on points of religion, verily nothing short of mad. St. Thomas, then, I say, wisely rests his theology on

the natural principle of right reason, side by side with the walls of Faith, when the truth revealed does not transcend altogether the plane of the human mind, as in the case of the mystery of the Holy and Undivided Trinity, where the truth must stand exclusively on the Divine Word. I might mention the names of Socrates, Plato, Diogenes, and others, as fathers of pagan philosophy; these men were truly great reasoners; whose purity of soul linked to a sharp mental acumen brought them the revenue of deep insight into natural principles of truth and goodness. God sent these men into the world to prepare the way, as it were, for Christianity. Theirs was as the gray dawn that preceded the day when the Eternal Sun, the Word of God, rose up, bright and red in the eastern heavens on Christmas morn. We find among them a sense of justice nothing short of marvellous. Ovid, the poet, when speaking of Pontus, makes him say: "I repent: I do penance, and suffer agony for my evil deed." He had been guilty of a wrong and his natural sense of justice cried out to him for satisfaction and atonement for the wrong he had done. Surely, his was no senseless suffering, nor futile writhing, nor meaningless self-torture, but, one most reasonably presumed to have been dictated and sustained by a lofty and a reasonable purpose. Nor was it one that concerned the state, but one that concerned a creature in his relations with the Creator. Thus, atonement for sin, or penance as a satisfaction, is dictated by reason.

In the natural idea of justice, punishment is correlative with a personal guilt. Cicero, who was himself a strong reasoner and noted logician, as one of the most brilliant of those glories that cluster round the memory of the ancient forum, makes allusion to King Alexander, who had slain his bosom friend, Clytus: "It was not without much effort," says Cicero, "that he refrained from laying violent hands on his own person, so earnest was his repentance." Surely we are to take these men as rational, and hence their repentance to be characterized by a right and noble motive. His natural idea of wrong led the king to feel that because he was guilty of evil he must needs do penance. He felt the need no less than the good of satisfaction. Perhaps Alexander's idea of justice was so exquisite — for to be overtrained is to be weakened, — that to be just, and fully so, his own life should atone for his crime: "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." Evidently, he debated the idea, and modified his extravagant notion that he himself must die in atonement; yet, although he disagreed on the degree of penance, the fact outlives all, that sin and punishment go, hand in hand, in the pagan mind. But the idea of guilt and punishment as correlative is set down, with the force of directness and simplicity, as a canon of reason, by that wonder and prodigy of the human mind, Socrates. "I hold," says he, "that the man who does an injustice, or is guilty of a crime, must be in every sense of the word, a miserable and unhappy man. I maintain that he is the more so

in so far as he fails to have rendered a proper atonement, undergone a due chastisement, and that his bad deeds remain unpunished ; but, I shall maintain that the sinner's unhappiness is lessened by the fact that he will have borne the just punishments of his faults." How then can men, as such, repudiate the Catholic spirit contained in the doctrine of penance? They cannot do so with any show of consistency without closing up the books of ancient, venerable, and respected sages, like Socrates, and Aristotle, and, in accordance therewith, be pronounced by the judgment of the world as beside themselves.

Tertullian in characteristic language remarks : "The one who has resolved upon offering satisfaction to God simply by repenting, repents of his repentance." Punishment, deeds of satisfaction, actions of atonement—the seed of conversion, sown in the heart, as expressed by the council referred to above, must burst forth from the heart into the flower of works of atonement ; for, as faith without works is dead, so is the seed of repentance, that perishes, undeveloped, and fruitless, in the bosom of the sinner. "Thou hast not left unpunished," says St. Augustine to the Lord, "the sins of those whom Thou hast pardoned. Thou pardonest him who confesses his sin, but, Thou pardonest only according to the measure in which the sinner punishes himself. Thus, mercy and justice are satisfied ; mercy is satisfied because man is delivered out of his sin : Justice is appeased because man's sin is punished." (On Psalm l.)

It is in the power of each and every one of us to go up at once to the realms of light immediately we part with the company of mortals; but, this must be by penance. Penance thus bridges over purgatory. We cannot otherwise escape the fire.

When sin is committed, the first law of harmony is punishment. Sorrow for the past, nor resolution for the future, nor the two conjointly and exclusively, can fulfil the law of penance. Charity would accomplish as much; but, penance is sorrow armed with a sword of vengeance against the guilty self, to chastise its insolence, to give it a lesson that is not liable to be too soon forgotten, and to thus effectually deter the soul from any future part in the rebellion of sin against God, and to excite moreover by the punishment a sense of hatred and disesteem of self, in view of the fact that it is God's enemy, Whose hatred, and his own, man has earned by the turpitude of his sin (see Trent). Thus despising himself, he proceeds to crush the rebellion and to bring about union: "I chastise my body and bring it into subjection."

Self-hatred is life, as the root of all sin is found in self-esteem — that leads to all the disasters of the soul. The triple end that the penitent has in his mind's eye is first, to efface from the soul its every spot and stain; second, to make satisfaction to God for the sin which he has committed, and this is an act of justice toward God; third, to reinstate himself in the favor and friendship of

God, Whom he has offended. St. Gregory the Great gives us the idea of penance as a satisfaction in his own simile: "It is not equivalent to paying one's debts simply not to run into new ones; we must, besides, pay off the debts we have already contracted." (De Cura pastorale.)

Now penance besides being a satisfaction, is also a medicine. St. Ambrose says that 'penance is as necessary as physics to the wounded:' All disorders of the body leave after them traces of their passage. They unlock the system to the friendships of sickness and infirmities: the ice is broken. The wounded soldier is more vulnerable in the injured joint than formerly. Were it not for his wound, he had never become the weather prophet that he is, being now able by the pains he feels, in the wounded parts, to prognosticate unfair weather. St. Bernard tells us, to our comfort, that 'penance is a medicine that expels fever, that repairs the powers and restores to perfect health.' When we admit sin, the soul is pierced as with an arrow of Satan; we feel the pain of the arrow lodged in our soul. Wisely, and by that wisdom we have in God, we turn to the physician: we go to confession. The confessor gives us absolution. He draws out the arrow. So far, it is well with us; but, we must go still farther, to perfect the work of the tribunal of penance, and heal up the wound. Alas, how often have the wounded souls scampered off as though their wounds had been healed, and the whole work of penance accomplished, when

absolution had been granted them. But they would not have it: the bathing of the wound, the painful application of the water and the salve were too irksome, if not too painful; and, so, they neglected the nursing of the wound inflicted by the arrow of their former sin, and hence the moral gangrene, the awful leprosy of the soul that consumes all its health and surrenders it to the empire of conscienceless perverseness, depravity and decay. Hence, that terrible deadness of men's souls, whereby they eat and sleep unmindful of the judgments of God, suspended over their heads by a meagre thread of life,—like the sword of Damocles,—that the faintest zephyr might break, plunging the immortal soul into an eternity of direst and unpardonable wretchedness. With the body, disease left unchecked, wounds and sickness left unnursed: with the soul, pious exercises, appointed by the confessor, for the penitent, a special diet for him, special things and occasions to be avoided by him,—all neglected, means universal decay.

It is with the soul, as with the body: a disease may be said to be incurable when the patient, loathing it, refuses the medicine that would accomplish his cure. In the same sense, some sins may be said to be incurable—when the sinner rejects the grace of God and refuses the proper medicine of salvation. The disease is not incurable, but it cannot be cured unless the confessor's prescriptions are carried out: "Unless ye do penance ye shall all perish." St.

Chrysostom tells us this in the simplest way: "It is not enough," said the great saint, "to draw out the arrow, but we must furthermore heal up the wound." The great swellings of the sea of wrath, like the mighty throbbings of the incensed divinity, have subsided, when the hand of the priest stretches forth in absolution over the troubled waters of the soul, even as Christ calmed with a gesture of His Omnipotent hand the sea-king in anger, and brought him to peace and rest; but theologians tell us that these consequences survive after the sin has been forgiven by the absolution: in God a residue of anger and indignation, that must be placated; in the penitent a residue of punishment that must be redeemed; and a residue of languor and bad habit to be uprooted. These call for the practise of penance to placate the anger of God, to liquidate our indebtedness to justice, and to rebuild our fallen nature, lying in the ruins of soreness and weakness. And, alas, sin leaves in us a propensity to a renewal of its folly. St. Bernard speaks of the medicine that casts out the fever, rebuilds the energies, and restores us to perfect health. St. Bernard was speaking of penance. The full function of penance will, then, be, to abolish even the scars of our sin, and to hand over to God the soul as white and unblemished as before the arrow had obtruded itself within its sanctuary—fit it for heaven.

The Fathers assure us that penance takes the place of God's justice. It has the prerogative of

participation in the commutative justice of God : to repair the injury offered to Him by sin, and to appease the avenging wrath stirred up in His Divine Bosom against us. Tertullian tells us that penance 'takes the place of God's anger.'—'*Pro Dei indignatione fungitur.*' What a privilege ! What a condescension ; what a trust ! We take the very place of God. Yet, the value of our penance is not from any intrinsic merit of the act, but simply because God has willed it, in His great love and mercy for man, through the passion and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as we have the sacrament of penance, so Almighty God has, in His merciful, good pleasure, seen fit to ordain that we shall have the privilege of doing penance, and He ordains that penance shall take the place of His own justice. O God ! how couldst Thou be so good—so merciful, as to impart such value to a human act ?

If we sin, God's justice demands that we shall suffer for it ; but, the extent of this suffering is, in a way, left to each soul to determine for itself. Man's ideas vary with the varying stages of his holiness. As we grow in the knowledge of God and of ourselves, in purity of life and unselfishness ; as we grow—in a word—in holiness, we will grow in the fear of God's justice, and progress in the virtue of penance. In the lives of saints, we find not one but has poured out wells of tears and fasted until his sainted body had been reduced to a mere collection of bones strung loosely together. Was it because these honored

men had sinned more than we that they did more penances and greater ones; and did them so much the longer? No; but because they were holier, and had higher and truer conceptions of their obligations to Almighty God. They saw into the purity and sanctity of God more clearly than we. In the Thirteenth Chapter of St. Luke, we read: "And there were present at that very time some that told him of the Gallileans, whose blood Pilot had mingled with their sacrifices and he answering, said to them: Think you that these Gallileans were sinners above all the men of Gallilee because they suffered such things? I say to you, No. But, unless you do penance you shall likewise perish."

We fancy the saints are heroes; and they are so to us, being, indeed, as they are, so far above us; but when we pause to consider, with more attention, the sanctity of God, as we catch the melodic echo of the heavenly choristers' '*Sanctus! Sanctus! Sanctus!*' what we have termed heroism fades away into the idea of common justice. I defy you to think, there was ever a saint who felt that in his austerities and penance he was suffering more than his unworthiness deserved. But, we, in our pride approve ourselves, though we are told by the voice of God, hinting at our danger, that only he 'whom God approves is really approved.' The pure, white clearness of eternal holiness is discerned by us enveloped in a robe of haze, for we see it through the intercepting moral cataract of our own disastrous,

perverse, illusive pride and passion. As for ourselves, then, if we are holy, or seriously wish to be so, we will do more generous penance. If, on the contrary, we persist in lacking the due comprehension of the sovereign greatness and holiness of God, we shall still, in spite of all, be forced to pay the debts we owe to God, though that payment shall have to be made with sore regret, and in a world that is yet to come.

Yes, brethren, the sinner contracts a debt to God, and penance is coin, genuine, and of full measure and weight, properly stamped with the Face of Jesus Christ.—Who shall quarrel with His fiat? Who shall dispute His creative power? God will accept it. He cannot repudiate it. There is no possibility of its demonetization; it is the currency of God's kingdom, sanctioned by the Sovereign of the eternal world. It fully relieves of all obligation to heaven, here, or hereafter, for the damage we have done to the dignity of the Almighty, by our sins, and by our shocking disregard of His, the Creator's rights over His creatures: "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." God will sift our works; He will examine the coin as He did in His earthly day, the piece of money bearing the image and inscription of Cæsar. So shall He inspect and scrutinize our penances. The coin must be genuine, it must bear His own stamp. Whose image is this? We answer Him: "Liege

of Heaven and of earth, 'tis a work of its own nature, painful and laborious, a work done by us in faith, and charity, and in the state of grace." "Ah, such indeed bears the image of Myself," shall the Master say. Such satisfactions are 'the redeemers', as it were, of sins. (St. Cyprian, Lib. 1, Ep. 3, Part. Med.)

It has been said of indulgences that it excites the analogy of leaping into the saddle and going to heaven, ahorse. We may say of penance, that it is a short-cut to glory. "Behold, the great priest who hath pleased the Lord, whilst he lived, and was found just, and in the time of wrath, ready for reconciliation." The Church here points her finger to her sainted Pontiff, in the capitulum of Lauds: So shall we be found just, and in the 'day of anger and of wrath,' we shall find an unreserved greeting, if in our day, whilst we are on earth, we too shall have placated God's justice, that is, done penance.

We feel the gentle hand of God's mercy in this great prerogative bestowed upon the Christian family, and, yet, right in the full glare of the fact, we are told that full satisfaction is a rare thing on earth; that men seldom do a proper penance for their sins. The words of St. Ambrose are calculated to make us pause on our way of self-complacency and self-delusion, and to halt on our path of flowers, to seriously reflect upon ourselves, with a view to a different measure of penance for ourselves, in the future. The saint says: "It is a more common thing to run across

persons who have never parted with their baptismal innocence than to find such as have done penance to the full extent."

For a model in true penance, we can not do better than to review the example of St. Mary of Egypt. The woman had been, it is true, a great sinner, but for many years, she did penance for her sins. The years of her marvellous atonement outnumber those of her foibles and follies. Her zeal for satisfaction outshone her passion for wrong, in character and in intensity. Living alone, far out in the desert, aloof from men, and from all human contact, without food, other than the desert yields, and with but shreds of raiment, we behold her. Her companions were the beasts that roamed in the wilderness. At length she was discovered, through the providence of God, shortly before her death, by a pious solitary, to whom she unbosomed her sad but wonderful history — sad, I say, but not less joyful; less guilty than virtuous. Now, after all these years, what was her only fear? It was not of the beasts, nor of her terrible and lonely surroundings: no, her solitary fear was that she had yet to stand before the judgment-seat of God: "Thou shalt not enter into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord, for in Thy sight no man shall be found just." When she thought of this, her little remnant of life almost deserted her with terror.

Now for another feature of penance. It is true that God's justice must chastise us, but, in pen-

ance, it is more the father who chastiseth his son. By our sins we have brought sorrow to the Heart of God, our Father—"Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee." Let us, then, realize fully the necessity of penance so that we may be fully reinstated in His friendship. "I am the Good Shepherd." What tenderness! what divine feeling! what immeasurable love! what soft pleading! No picture inspires such rapture as that of Christ, the Good Shepherd, bearing back on His shoulders the recreant and fleecy wanderer. Let us walk after the adorable penitent, for 'nothing can appear so unseemly as a delicate member under a head crowned with thorns,' says St. Bernard. He redeemed us once. He carried us on His shoulders from the broad plains of sin, through baptism, into the Fold; and He has done this without any merit or co-operation on our part. Now, let us, if we have wandered away, at least be willing to trudge back, grateful for the privilege of being able to return, and thankful for being led by God's grace back to the Fold—"I am the Light." Jesus carried us on His shoulders once. Now we must walk—though in His mercy He suffers us to lean upon Him. He created us without our having any share in the work; but, in salvation it must be otherwise. Man must co-operate.

No scene is more surely calculated to uplift our spirits than that of the father of the prodigal son. Standing before his window, he sees his boy coming home to his father over the hills.

Evidently he was looking for him and longing for his son's return. He comes! he comes! O, Jesus, what love, what solicitude! The father is running to meet his penitent boy, worn with his wanderings, haggard from dissipation and want, returning penitent. Make ready the best room, sing, make merry, sound the harps, rejoice, my boy, my boy! O would that the sinner might feel the weight of this truth: that the longer his journey is away from his father's house, the longer must be the journey by which he shall retrieve his steps. Yes, step by step — farthing for farthing.

Man falls. It is his plain duty, in the light of reason and of faith, to rise up at once out of the slough. Sins are not like mud-spots, which had better be left to dry and cake, because they are the more easily retired, and the stain more easily obliterated. Sin is more like the ink-spatter, upon which we ought to speedily lay the blotter, and which, if left to dry, soaks into the tissues, becomes glutinous, and displays itself in a thick, black, impervious crust of the most stubborn adhesiveness. Let us never grow familiar with sin. To the fountain of forgiveness at once! and if, like the ink, attended to, with speed, a mark yet remains, like the blotted ink spot, we can at least read, beneath the smudge, the sure and comforting words of forgiveness, spoken to Magdalen: "Thy sins are forgiven thee."

Had the prodigal said the word sooner: "I will rise and will go to my father," his penance

would have been milder. So it is, with men. Often they madly hope to blot out misfortune and repair the folly of one sin by other and newer excesses, when, in reality, they go further and further away, and sink deeper and deeper into the mire, and lay up new debts and worse obligation for themselves against the day of reckoning and wrath. If we have sinned, let us face justice at once—we cannot hide from it long. It tracks us like a hound, and, if not before, the guilty conscience will overtake us at our death-bed.

In the bright glint of the one idea of mercy, developed so powerfully, in the touching story of the Prodigal Son, we are in danger of losing sight of the idea of the penitent's necessary and noble part in this parable. "I will arise," said he—"I will sin no more." He had humbled himself. This is always the prelude to repentance, and repentance starts on its way of action when it resolves to renounce sin. "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee. I am not worthy to be called thy son." So far, his penance is interior. He is, as yet, but in the province or at the stage of resolving on a course of atonement; but, he must carry his interior plan into execution. Bravely he does so, —'and rising up he went to his father.' He did penance; he walked home, weak and hungry: perhaps he begged a ride, now and then, to ease his pain, —but say rather, to shift the scene of the pain from the sore joint to the sting of the heart, by occasionally begging. It was a change

for him, though from a lighter one to a heavier cross.

Oh, who knows the fullness of God's love, and pity for sinners? No sot, no harlot in the vilest slums, no thief—no sinner on earth howsoever depraved, but at this moment God will receive him back, as the prodigal son. Oh, could the righteous be only penetrated by this sublime truth! They would do more to recall the erring from their error, and would spend more of the time now spent in vacuous and often affected ejaculations of pity, in more positive and substantial efforts with purse and prayer to recall God's erring children back to their Father's house, to His heart, and to His love. Any sinner has but to humble himself, turn about and do a little penance. What could better induce us to become penitent than to contemplate the effect of the penance on the heart of God? God was so delighted with a little penance that as the father of the prodigal He could not wait to testify His Fatherly pleasure over His son's return: "And when he was yet a great way off his father saw him coming and was moved with compassion." This is not enough to demonstrate the effect of penance on the heart of God. Our generosity and willingness to do penance induces God furthermore to strike off something of our debt: "And running to him fell upon his neck and kissed him." And in the bliss of that fond embrace the penitent forgot all his pains.

The father had anticipated the terrible sacrifices the son was to make in confessing to him his un-

worthiness to be called his son ; for, the chief part of penance is the humbling one's-self ; this is the crucifixion of the heart. So, he kissed his boy and embraced him, to make it easy for him, first of all. Here again the father was content with half the penance, and cancelled the other half ; for the son (Verse xix) had resolved upon adding to his confession of filial unworthiness the overwhelming mortification of begging of his own father to be taken in as a hired servant in the very house of his father. The mercy of the father was moved ; his heart melted when the son confessed his unworthiness to be called his boy. He did not ask him to do all the penance ; he did not wait to have him say out : "Make me one of thy hired servants." The poor penitent had misconstrued the purpose of penance, or miscalculated its value ; for, the fruit of penance is not degradation ; its motive is not hatred but love. It was not the yokel's frock that fell to him with penance nor a destiny cast with bumpkins. Penance did not make him a servant in his father's house, but it merited for him 'the first robe of honor and the calf of plenty.' 'Glory and riches are in his house,' and they are for each and every man who, first of all humbling himself, is in this way brought to do penance : "A contrite and humble heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." What is the strange triumph of the penitent, that occasions such fervid alleluias in heaven ? Tell me, if it be because victory has been snatched out of the very jaws of defeat ; and Christ in a great a race has won over Lucifer, after a death

struggle against odds for the prize of the immortal soul—wrestling with perhaps trained adversaries, robust, educated passions. Is it that the penitent has shown the greatest of virtues, in his penance, and has won the victory over his own pride,—the first and last, and stoutest, the most stubborn and crafty of all his foes? To sin, indeed, under the motive that sinning would furnish occasion for repentance, so that repentance, in turn, would occasion joy, could not be anything less than the most glaring impiety. Such a principle would contravene moral principles, and would be an hallucination; and yet after all, the word of the Master must stand: there is no rewarding sin in it, and yet it sets before the sinners' eyes who repent, glory and honors tremendous and beyond measure. Strong word, and mysterious! I do not say that it is preferable to have sinned and done penance above having never sinned. I could not say such a thing. Our Lord shall speak: "I say to you that even so there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance."

CHAPTER IV.

THE INFLUENCE OF PENANCE.

YOU have now had the Divine Word sown in your souls. How will It affect your lives? In a spirit of reflection, not in an elated spirit of high-mindedness nor in one of speculative enthusiasm, let us consider—that is calmly and practically. Shall penance affect your life; will it enter into it and give it a new character? Will it be simply read by you, or even studied by you, and admired by you,—this doctrine of penance, and afterward be left behind you in your oratories or in this chapel? Will you carry away with you the remembrance of it, as a remembrance of no effect, a cold recollection, as it were, of history or mythology? Shall it be simply a beautiful doctrine with you, a euphonic theory, to be admitted to your Christian philosophy, and thought out and accepted by you in your meditations, and end there? Will it be no more than bare ecclesiastic knowledge, the knowledge of Christian gentlemen and ladies, which is of no practical use, and which leaves the heart still the same, unchanged? Shall it be simply agreed that you must believe it; is it only ecclesiastical etiquette, as it were, which demands that you believe in penance, in public, and make some manifestation of it, during the Lenten season, by absence from

tumultuous festivities, and when you come back from church—as in the instance of the gentleman who takes off his evening-coat—the manifestation in public, of this doctrine, is cast out of your private life and home? Like the seed of God's Word, that it is, does not the doctrine of penance fall upon your hearts as seed upon the rock? Shall the doctrine, I say to myself, of penance, enter into my private life, to give a character to my daily doings, to my life personally, my thoughts, my affections, my words, and actions? I trust so; and yet, penance is an old doctrine; it is familiar to the world. The Church has taught it uninterruptedly since the days of John the Baptist.

Penance is a familiar doctrine, yet I shall not chastise the world by any overwhelming criticism on its practice. I can quote, however, with propriety, the judgment of a saint, and he no less a saint than Ambrose, who says: "There are more persons who have preserved their baptismal innocence than people who, having lost their innocence, have done the proper and becoming penance." Yes, brethren, it was ever so. The multitudes now, like the Jews of old, 'having ears hear not.' You perform the penance laid upon you by the priest in the sacrament of penance—this of course is one of the conditions that assure the validity of the sacraments; but on the general principle of the virtue, which guarantees our perseverance in goodness and the perpetuation of the good effects of the sacrament, by building up the constitution, we do nothing, or little; for, the sacra-

ment is one thing and the virtue of penance quite another. To impress upon you the actuality of this difference, and furthermore the necessity of having and of cultivating the *virtue* of penance, I might ask: How long does the effect of the sacraments linger in you? Is it not only till the sparrow comes and devours the seed, or the first gust of wind to whirl it off? Your penance is on the surface; it has not sunken down into your heart to take root, there, and to grow up and fructify. If I said few of you have done penance, I would be assuming the posture of a critic, and verily I would shrink from such an attitude; yet do not flatter yourselves that you are different from the Christians of the past. Sin drugs the soul; so, the world has been in a comatose state: Why, yes, the world has been in a torpor for ages! We have eyes, we seem to see, but we see not. Now it behooves us to rouse ourselves from this old lethargy, from this comatose state; for to have simply known the doctrine of penance; to have been blessed with a knowledge of our duty, in this respect, will only be another witness against us, a new grace squandered, one talent more buried in the earth!

Look at the record of all the sacraments you have received from the day your sins were absolved for the first time! What fruits have they brought forth? This is a practical question, and it ought to appeal to you as precisely as that two and two make four. What is the result, on your life, of these sacraments? What is the

difference between some Catholics and Protestants? Nought. This proves to us that there is something defective. Christ, God's eternal Son, sanctified the world; He has left us the sacrament of penance; He has left us His Own Body and Blood; and the sacraments were instituted by Jesus Christ to confer the graces we need. Yet, I ask again, do you see all Catholics acting differently to Protestants? Are some of you not like the rest of the world — wicked in practise, unexemplary, and not doers of penance?

No, it is not that the sacraments are defective: the Blood of Jesus Christ is all-powerful to sanctify us: the words of Our Lord have been efficacious of themselves. The sacraments of the Church should make us saints. Why is it not so with some? I can answer in the words of St. Augustine, when he says: "In the satisfaction for grievous sins, not words only, but works, are looked for; tears, sighs, alms and long-continued fasts are to be added to our prayers." I can answer you again in the words of other saints, as, for example, in the bold words of St. Gregory.

Such language ought to make us tremble when we see the little results from the sacraments in our lives; sacraments destined and ordained to make us holy, as our Heavenly Father is holy; for, it shows us a defectiveness, and where alone the source of it lies in the sacramental processes. St. Gregory tells us: "Our confessions are of no avail unless we assume the labor of penance; and, furthermore, we cannot look upon anyone as being

truly and sincerely converted unless he will struggle to wash out his sins, by the proper painful austerities."

We must copy the life of the early Christians, and cultivate the spirit of the saints of God. After their confession there was a long siege of self-annihilation, scourgings, lamentations, tears and fasts. Shall you be among the great multitude that will not do penance? Shall you stand with the many—barren fig-trees? St. John, when he came to preach penance, said: "For now the axe is laid to the root of the tree. Every tree, therefore, that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire." What fruits, you ask, shall we bring forth? "Fruits worthy of penance," is John's answer to this question. "Bring forth fruits worthy of penance."

"We must," says St. Gregory, "take notice that the friend of the Spouse admonishes us, not only to bring forth fruits of penance, but to show fruits worthy of penance. It is one thing to produce the fruit of penance, and quite another thing to show fruits worthy of penance,—for example: If one has not done anything wrong, illicit, he may indulge in licit things; but, if one has committed fornication, or, what is worse, adultery, he must abstain from licit, lawful things, to the measure in which he has indulged himself in unlawful things." (Brev. Homily, iv. Sunday of Advent.) A fruit tree without fruit is a thing without a purpose; it has no place in existence. A fruit tree without fruit is a reproach to the

orchard, a standing aspersion upon the labor of the husbandman, who will cut it down and burn it. Have you brought forth any fruits of penance in your lives? How many times will Our Lord come in the autumn, looking anxiously, seeking for fruit? — How often come to us, and finding our branches fruitless, still tolerate us in His orchard? Christ finds our souls like barren fig-trees, with no solid virtues; only the barren semblances of piety; the leaves that cover no fruits of solid virtue. The Lord was hungry, but it was for souls. It is the fig-tree He seeks, and He seeks good fruit—the fruit of the glory we ought to give Him. How long will Almighty God endure us? How long will He come to our souls, in the missions we make, in the Communions we receive? We have seen in our self-examinations, that up to this time we have been barren. Will He come again to us and say: ‘I will give you another opportunity?’ How long will He endure us, bringing forth no fruit; giving us His Body and Blood, and no fruits to show the Divine Husbandman—the tree is yet sterile? We do not repay the Husbandman’s care; how long will Almighty God endure it, before He shall say: “Cut it down and cast it into the fire?” A barren fruit tree, I say again, is a reproach to the orchard, and it should be cut down. A man is useless when he brings forth no fruit in his soul. Our Divine Lord will some day, if we exhaust the allotted measure of His mercy to us, pronounce the same judgment on our soul as

He did on the fig-tree. God gives the formal sentence to the damned soul on one occasion, in prose, when He says: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," but He is the Divine Poet, so to speak, when He addresses the lost soul and consigns it to dark futurity, under the simile of the fig-tree, wherein He says: "May no fruit grow on thee henceforth forever." In the prose sentence, God simply pronounces the judgment, but in the breadth and depth of the poetical condemnation, the sentence contains the cause—"No fruit!" Yes, God has been looking for fruit; He has been waiting for it; He has been anxious for it; He has thirsted for it. No fruit has been forthcoming. Why should God let the tree stand? Brethren, *Ad quid venisti?*—why are we in this world?

Our penance should be of the proper character. It should be severe. No penance, however, ought to be considered in reality severe, for it means—salvation! It means the 'one thing necessary.' If the damned souls could but return to 'the way,' no possible temporal affliction would be, in their judgment, less than extravagant indulgence on the part of God, in placing heavenly glory at such a low cost. Penances, objectively, are not severe: the severity is subjective. In reality they are not more than our sins have indeed merited. So, let us, in our penances, observe a proper severity. Let us not fancy that, because God is merciful, we have not to do penance. It is the law of the Church, and

though the discipline of the Church is softened to suit climatic and social conditions, penance is as essential to-day as it was in the day of canonical penance. We should despise and rebuke sin as much as God does, and when I speak thus, I speak of penance. I say, the life of a man who has once lost, by a mortal sin, the justice, to which he had been born by baptism, ought to be a life of unceasing penance. If the multifarious duties of mankind will not allow us to perform formal penance, we must still have the *spirit* of penance. The Apostle says: "Pray always," though it is the *spirit* of prayer to which he alludes. If once we have sinned, there ought to be, far down in our souls, a silent, underlying principle emanating from the conviction that we have sinned against the law. The remembrances of our ingratitude to God, a deep humility, and a sincere hatred toward ourselves, like the *spirit* of prayer, should influence, permeate and characterize all our actions, and furnish the chief motive of many of them, just as that unconscious consciousness of our own helplessness and the need of God's assistance, momentarily, form the laws of spiritual gravitation, governing and silently drawing to God all that we do, say, or think, as to a center — which constitutes the *spirit* of prayer.

There are many things that could be said in relation to the severity of our penance. We ought to bring forth fruits worthy of penance. What do we mean by this? Not any sort of fruit will do — the fruits should be worthy. St. Augustine says:

“I shall tell you what I know to be a salutary penance: we must put to death our flesh; we must so mortify ourselves that we shall be made tame. Passions must be mortified. For the sake of salvation we must accept all these afflictions which come down to us from the hands of God.” St. Cyprian says: “Our sighs and tears should be in keeping with our sins; to the deeper wounds salutary remedies must be applied, and in no case must the penance be less than the sin.” The internal law of the Church, or the *spirit*, is the same. The relaxation is only in the discipline. At present there is only enough to make up the validity in the sacrament. The performance of proper penance is a matter that lies between God and your own soul: do it and live, neglect it and die.

Penance is not easy. From the various names the Fathers of the Church have bestowed on penance, we deduce the idea of labor. It has been called a ‘laborious baptism.’ It is the second baptism, as the first is the baptism of water,—“And He came into all the country about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of penance” (Luke iii.) When you are baptized you become as white as the Alpine snows—not a mark, not a semblance of a scar, not a discoloration is observable. When you were baptized this whiteness came upon your soul; when you sinned you lost this purity. Now you must regain it, and it is not so easy a process as to be baptized by water. The first was easy; there was no penance to be done then; but, now,

we have penance to do in order to recover this innocence: we have to receive another baptism. Where is the fountain that contains the water that will make us innocent again? Lo! the fountains—these two eyes. Yes, these eyes are the fountains, whose waters spring from the heart within, broken with sorrow, melted into penance. And the salt which the priest puts on the tongue of the infant, becomes, in penance, the bread of human affliction and penitential sorrow. This is a second baptism.

Penance here contains the idea of labor. Some of the Fathers of the Church express penance by a terrible word: they call it a temporal hell. This, truly, is a fierce word. The hell hereafter is perfect retribution; it is justice, and it shall not end. Here the temporal hell will end. Penance is a hell that shall save us. The drunkard cannot endure his thirst, nor the libertine his temptation to lust; how will they endure the cravings that will be their punishment in the everlasting misery of hell? Penance is called a salutary Gehenna, a plank after the shipwreck. Do not these names imply labor? A laborious baptism means tears: it means the endurance of hardships. When shall the mariner, whose ship has been wrecked, let go the plank? Only when he shall have reached the shore. So with penance, as long as we live there should be no respite from it. To do penance we require, indeed, the courage of the man who is in mid-ocean, the survivor of a wrecked crew, clinging to a plank and buffeted by the waves.

The spirit of penance must dominate our entire life. We shall work as penitents, and by the sweat of our brow we shall earn the bread of immortality. When will our penance end? When the evening bell calls the laborer from the field, and the shadows of death are on; only he that 'shall have persevered to the end shall be saved.' Now, I trust your penance will be commensurate with the gravity, the number and the character of your sins. Remember this law of justice, and observe it.

Now before we diagnose the various penances, set down for us, it would be wise to lay open a few preliminary notions anent the subject of merit. Good works have a two-fold character. They may be of impetration, or the obtaining of what is commonly understood as the object of prayer; that is to say, anything we stand in need of. Again, they may have a satisfactorial character, as when they have the power of paying up for the sins we have committed,—that is, of *satisfying* for them. There are two kinds of merit;—*de condigno*—to use the language of the schools—by which good works done for God, are rewarded by Him in justice, as established on God's promises of reward. The origin and force of this reward are based upon the promise, but the promise itself is gratuitous. St. Augustine says God is our debtor: "Thou owest me because Thou hast promised me." Though God must reward us, it is only because He has promised of His Own mercy and bounty, and, so to speak, free will.

The second kind of merit theologians call *de congruo*; wherein God is not obliged to reward by dint of any promise, but does so because He chooses, by a sort of generosity or civility. It is the gift of compliment, whereby God rewards our good works. This is essential for you to know; but we will restrict the application of these principles to our subject of penance. The Church tells us that in order to *satisfy* for our sins, we ought to be in a 'state of grace.' In order, I repeat, to satisfy God for sin we must be in a state of sanctifying grace, and the works done must be such as are in their own nature, of a 'laborious' or 'painful' character. St. Cyprian assures us, such satisfactory works are the 'redeemers,' as it were, of sin. We ought to be in a state of sanctifying grace, I say, if we want to atone for our sins. God is then obliged to give us a reward, but, although we can thus satisfy for our sins, there are times, however, when God does not accept our works as satisfactorial. I say, God is obliged, though He is not at all times under obligation so to do. When David sinned God would accept no penance from him, but insisted on the one punishment, namely, that of the death of his son. God decreed a certain punishment. David said: "I shall fast and I shall pray, and perhaps God will yet relent and spare the boy." God was inexorable. He would not accept anything but what His justice decreed. The Council of Trent teaches, not only the works of penance, voluntarily assumed, satisfy for our

sins, but, all afflictions that come to us, when patiently borne, become endowed with the power to satisfy the Father through Jesus Christ. As a general rule, when we accomplish any work in satisfaction for our sins, God accepts these works we offer, and we can offer satisfaction not only for our own sins, but for the sins of others; for, it is our privilege, according to the consoling doctrine of the communion of saints, that we may satisfy even for others. This is, says Suarez, according to the law of friendship. "I will not call you servants now, but friends." But, what we merit for ourselves in justice, or *de condigno*, we merit for others only as compliment, or favor—*de congruo*. Now, if it should ever be our misfortune to lose the state of grace, we should speedily make an act of perfect contrition, so as to regain, as speedily as possible, the privileges of grace. One who is not in the state of grace and friendship with God may receive graces from God, but he cannot satisfy for his own sins nor for those of others. To say otherwise, would be a flat contradiction. One who is God's enemy; upon whom God looks with displeasure; whose soul is made loathsome and freighted with the weight of mortal sin, cannot, consistently, satisfy for sin. Such a one has lost favor at court. God will accept no satisfaction from him. Our holy Church tells us that all satisfactions are embraced under three heads—'Prayer,' 'fasting' and 'almsdeeds.' St. John, the Apostle, informs us that whatever is evil on this earth, is

from the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life. Let us look into the mutual relations of these three, that is, the satisfactions specified by Trent and the three great sins indicated by St. John. John diagnoses the disorder: He says: "Pride of life." The Church says you must pray — Here is the antidote.

This pride of life the Church corrects and cures by prayer. John declares a man to have 'the lust of the flesh;' the Church says to such a one, 'fast, deny the flesh, kill it.' John says: "Lust of the eyes," a man who loves money: he covets wealth, he hordes it—it is a passion; and the Church says to him: 'give to the poor—to reduce the fever, and thus overcome.' These are the three chief heads, and under these all penances are embraced. No matter what the penance may be, at the root of its character will be found one of these three things, prayer, fasting or almsdeeds. Let us remember, then, how, for example, the rich man, Iscariot, the avaricious one, carries his sack of gold as the camel does his hump; and, as the camel cannot pass through the eye of a needle, no more can the rich man, unless he disencumbers himself of his gold, enter through the gateway of the kingdom of heaven. Yes, the superfluous fleece must be shorn, by kindness to the poor, if the rich man will become a 'lamb of God.'

"Let him that has two coats give to him that has none, and thus will the lust of the eyes be subdued by penance." To subdue the lust of the

flesh the Church says, imperatively, 'fast!' For every evil thought, for every evil act of mind, or action of body, be it of tongue, of eye, or of any other sense,—for all, fast, deny, abstain, in order to correct, repair and cure. Abstaining from food is not the only kind of fasting, then. If the eyes have beheld anything obnoxious, deny them some pleasant sight, turn them away from some pleasant scene; shut up your ears from some pleasurable sound of music; punish the garrulous and ribald tongue by silence, or force upon it some edifying word, to atone for the wicked, immodest, or frivolous things it uttered. Fasting is not restricted to the stomach; we must fast from the passions, abstaining with the eyes, ears, tongue, and all the 'members' of the body, because they have all conspired to bring sin into the soul; you can abstain with the ears, abstain with the tongue; and this is all embraced in the word 'fast!' For the pride of life, the Church commands us to pray, and prayer which the Church lays down for us will most surely antithesize this pride of life that is in us. How many of you have yielded to this pride of life? How many of you lack the proper degree of humility? Be candid. How many of you have not fancied you ought to be in a higher station or degree in life? You are uneasy and restless from ambition: the love of honor and of distinction that consumes the typical worldling, burns brightly in your hearts. The Church says: 'Put out this fire with prayer. Pour upon the flames

fervid supplications to God. Be humble in your station, and in the degree within your station.' The three lusts, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, are personified thus: The lust of the eyes by Judas, who coveted gain, the lust of the flesh by Dives, who feasted highly on rich viands, and the pride of life by Lucifer, who looked with covetous eye upon the very throne of the Divinity. If you have made up your mind to do penance, you ought to know your own character; you ought to know whether it is pride, or the lust of the flesh, or of the eyes, that you have to overcome. Whatever it may be, the Church has pointed out to you the means of penance, to which God will attach the grace that will enable you to succeed in overcoming yourselves.

Life is a warfare. We have enemies on every side. Where is our weak point? Strengthen it. It is possible that we would bestow special care upon parts that do not warrant by their condition or character any special solicitude. There are persons, for example, who boast of temperance, but have such no weak point at all! Are they not, perhaps, uncharitable to the weaker brother? It is said that we all live in glass houses. This, in a way, is true, but methinks it would be more correct to say that each one of us lives in a house of clay, with some part of the wall made of glass. That is to say, no man is strong in any of his nature—'the flesh is weak'—'all flesh is grass,' but each one is especially weak on some fixed

point, in the part, namely, where the wall is of glass. Here is where we must barricade our wall.

To know accurately our character and to ascertain precisely, and without danger of error, what shall be our chief moral danger in life, it is wise to consult with a learned and prudent confessor to locate our weak point, lest we, misjudging ourselves, misapply our energies, and, as it were, waste our forces. Our religious development and evolution will then be a solid and true growth in holiness. Our efforts will be scientific, so to speak, and not left to uncertainty or chance. On the contrary, every blow struck for salvation will be judiciously directed and of telling effect. We shall not be beating the air.

In the terrible fall of Babylon so powerfully depicted by St. John in the Apocalypse, we may read the fall of the soul: "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen." Here is the deplorable fact, the recital of the awful calamity, the avowal of the most disastrous event possible to man—the fall of the immortal soul from the realms of grace; its lamentable passing out from the delights of God, its loss of the privileges and the glory of God's friendship and favor, with the immense consequent share in the graces and benefits of the circle of God's beloved in heaven and on earth which emanates from the laws of the communion of saints. Meetly, indeed, might the angels cry out in the eloquence of regret and sympathy: 'Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen.' What a

tremendous force is revealed in the repetition of the catastrophe; what an unspeakable misfortune — is fallen! is fallen!

To what a state has the soul come down. It has become the 'habitation of devils and the hold of every unclean spirit' (Apoc. xviii. 22). The peace and joy of God have forsaken her with the sweet interchange of love with the Lord and His angels and saints; and the soft whisperings of affection divine are no more — 'the voice of harpers and of musicians and of them that play on the pipe and on the trumpet shall no more be heard in thee.' (Apoc. xxiii. 22).

Who can measure the evil results of a fall of the soul, when the fruits of all our virtuous toils perish in an instant—"And the fruits of the desire of thy soul are departed from thee and all the fat and goodly things are perished from thee." (v. 14).

It is true that the glimmer of reason still lights up our way, but the supernatural light is shut out from us. The grace of Him Who is the 'Light of the World' has departed — "And the light of the lamp shall shine no more at all in thee, and the voice of the bridegroom and the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee." (v. 23.)

Saints bewail the overthrow of the soul. Before the tabernacle and the crucifix they sigh and lament over it — "Alas! Alas! that great city which was clothed with fine linen and purple and scarlet, and was gilt with gold and precious stones and pearls. For in one hour are so great riches

come to nought." (v. 16, 17.) Yes, all our past merits are come to nought. In natural calamities, men ponder over their losses and when they realize the situation, they are cast down because the loss is irretrievable. How, indeed, they would wish to regain their property and rebuild their ruined fortunes, but how often all this is beyond hope!

Such a dilemma is never possible in the life of the soul. If disaster overtake one, and the moral fortune is laid in ruin, the catastrophe may always be repaired. The turning of the heart from evil back to God is equivalent to setting up again the ruined foundation of our spiritual condition and fortune, or to be plain, the restoration of our credit with God and its collateral privileges of drawing graces from heaven *ad libitum* and *ad infinitum*; and the farther development or rebuilding up thereon, in other words, complete restoration of our former position lost through sin, will be accomplished, sooner or later, but infallibly accomplished by penance. The Apostle points out the way. Beneath the clusters of Easter lilies and the scented masses of white roses, the road of penance that makes for 'the mountain of the Lord' lies open. It is never closed—blessed path trodden by Jesus, John, and the saints. In the very midst of her paschal joys the Church, in the Holy Sacrifice of Tuesday, and in the Mass of Wednesday, in Easter Week, recalls the words indicating the hard road cutting through the Paschal bower. "Do penance and be converted." (Acts. iii)

The first step in penance is conversion. Seek first of all forgiveness of God, by a perfect contrition, the very instant you realize the dreadful calamity of grievous sin, and, as soon as possible confess, and be absolved by the minister of God. Here is the foundation. How shall we rebuild up the soul? We have answered this question above, but we will borrow and adapt the words of St. John to deepen the impression whilst we refresh an important memory. "Render to her as she also hath rendered to you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup, wherein she hath mingled, mingle ye double with her. As much as she hath glorified herself and lived on delicacies, so much the more torment and sorrow give ye to her." (Apoc. xviii. 6, 7.)

The soul that does penance, in the sense of being converted, occasions that greater joy in heaven. The putting off the works of darkness and resuming the white robe of baptism, is the adorning the soul, which is the bride of the Lamb for the wedding-feast. Penance as a conversion of the soul stirs up the Alleluias, but the soul herself will not hear this rejoicing till she is rebuilt up, or the satisfactions are accomplished—purified and justified: "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of great thunders, saying: 'Alleluia.' . . . Let us be glad and rejoice; and give glory to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come and His wife hath prepared herself. And it is granted to her that she should

clothe herself with fine linen glittering and white. For the fine linen are the justifications of saints." (Apoc. xix. 6, 7, 8.)

By grievous sin the soul is put to death. Is this your condition, or shall it ever be so? Know that to enjoy resurrection, to glory with the Lord and His chosen, the soul must first rise from the tomb of sin. Be convinced that the grace which works this wonder is clearly and exclusively penance—"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection." (Apoc. xx. 6.) May the Master grant us all the spirit of the desert—the grace of penance.

CHAPTER V.

THE TRAGEDY OF REDEMPTION.

THE blood-thirstiness and the subterfuges of the Jewish priests, with the witnesses maliciously suborned to forge testimony against Jesus, the trumped-up charge, the treason of Judas, the fiendish, panting thirst for the blood of their Divine Master, which bedevilled the house of Israel which He came to save, the plots to entrap the innocent Son of God and involve Him in the meshes of conspiracy against the civil authority, and the final murder of the God-Man, constitute the elements of our subject, — the Tragedy of Redemption. To-day we will simply and briefly rehearse the action of the tragedy, later the climax, and the denouement.

It is desirable that your attention should rest upon the theological features of this subject. You, of course, are familiar with the ideas, though they have not made much of an impression on you. But I call your special attention, now, to the commanding fact that Jesus Christ, God's eternal Son, is the world's Hero and Saviour. I invite you to weigh well the consequence of this sublime fact; namely, that were it not for His Divine Charity no man would ever be blessed with immortal happiness. The doors of heaven must, forsooth, be shut and barred against

the children of men forever. This simple truth and fact would be enough to draw us into seclusion, to bring us out with Ignatius to the cave, there to spend the rest of our days in meditating upon the charity of heaven. To fully understand this subject, we have, by way of prelude, to unveil the condition of Adam before the fall, as it touched upon the faculties of his soul, and the powers of his senses. Adam, before he broke the commandment, — in which consisted his religion and test, — possessed an intellect so bright that he could read with unstrained eye, every message from the sovereign mind of God clearly. There were no clouds browsing in his moral sky; nay, not a fleck in the firmament, not a beam was there, dancing in the eternal sun: the light of heaven poured down upon his soul freely, copiously, and purely. There was no such word, then, in his lexicon, as doubt. He saw clearly, I say, what God willed him to do, and in his own will there flourished, moreover, that control and domination complete that belongs to the ideal faculty. His will held the mastery over all his thoughts and actions. Adam, like David, could say, — ‘The Lord ruleth over me;’ but David could never say what Adam could say besides: I rule the world. Over his soul was spread the peace of a summer evening — no disquiet: All was calm — not a ripple, not an anxiety. In that unimpassioned stillness, in that blissful tranquillity, in that unruffled lake of his soul God was visible as in a mirror. He was so

pure and bright in his entity that he reflected the very splendors of God about him, as in the untroubled lake we see the skies reflected: "Let us make man to our own image and likeness." There was everything of luxuriance in the field; loveliest flowers, fruits of richest nectar, trees of shapely beauty—everything in abundance and variety, to make him glad and contented in his earthly home. God had set him in a paradise of pleasure. He had control of the sea; he modulated the speed of the birds; the fishes of the deep gave him subjection; all was beneath the sway of his will—he was monarch of all he surveyed. Every creature of earth, of water and of sky tamely fulfilled his commands. God made him king. The harmony of heaven's first law flooded the soul of sceptred man, affording a royal pleasure and a comfort worthy of the monarch of all the earth. But Adam fell into sin, and in an instant there was a revulsion: anarchy was at that very moment born into the world: disorder supplanted order. There was a rebellion in creation and in nature. Now the lion claims the forest for his own, and refuses the obedience he had so mutely and swiftly given to Adam, the King. The mighty whale, the leviathan of the deep, spouts opprobrious contempt and defiance at man. The eagle owes him no further obedience. Everything is beyond his control: there is, in truth, anarchy widespread. The body declines to obey the commands of the will, as the will declines to follow the leading of

the mind. What a change in the great state of that monarch! What a state, what a throne, what a sceptre he flung away! You must consider Adam in this dire condition—a spectacle of misery; there, in a nook of the garden, crouching from the angry face of God, nursing in his bosom new thoughts of wrong; morally deaf, dumb and blind; struck down with a paralysis in all his free and noble faculties, the quondam king, ruled himself, now,—by a tyrant! See him overwhelmed with dismal disgrace, the accursed of the Most-High—the grand work of human creation a lamentable failure! Under this doom, Adam, the ruler, is bound a prisoner in chains. He was a monarch, but now—a serf, a captive, a condemned and hunted criminal! Instead of worshipping God—in lieu of exercising control—Adam loves the very chains that bind him to his prison; the passions of his own rebellious heart are the divinities he now worships. The veil of the ancient temple is rent in twain. The light of God's grace has gone out from him, as, when the Son of God was crucified, there came an eclipse in the physical world, and all the light of the sun fled from the guilty world. God gave man the liberty of obeying or disobeying the law. Man has this right—right, say I? nay, not the right, exactly, but the liberty, of burying the dagger's keen point in his own heart. He can become a suicide, but can he recall the life that he has driven from his body? This no man can do by

his own power. In vain would science by its ingenuity and its progressive comprehension of electrical agencies, restore to the dead man the principle of life that is quenched in him. Adam is a moral suicide; he expelled the life of God that was in him. He has laid violent hands upon his own soul, but he cannot restore that moral life he took. This leads us, then, to an important fact: Adam has sinned against God and now he must perish forever — he is dead to God. I am sure that few of us, if any, realize the extent of the consequences of that dreadfull fall. Few realize this fact, that it meant universal death. All do not realize it, though true it is, that when Adam sinned all his descendants fell with him; that after him death was to come upon all men. As in him all men shall have sinned. St. Paul tells us that ‘as by one man came death, so by one Man came the resurrection. As by one man sin entered into the world, so by one Man has justice come into the world.’ Adam could not plead lack of foresight to avert the consequences of his sin, for Almighty God had said: “In whatsoever day thou shalt eat, thou shalt die the death.” The Lord addressed him as the father and root of the whole human family. In that contract he made pledges for us, whereby we all promised that in case that fruit should be eaten we would all perish: “As by one man sin hath entered into the world, and by sin death, so death passed unto all men in whom all have sinned,” says St. Paul.

There always exists between the humblest peasant, in his gray and sunburnt jerkin, and the mightiest monarch in his purple; between the meanest scambler and the most honorable gentleman, or polished of men, some proportion. They have a common origin, nature and end, a kindred misery in life; and, for both, there is the grave. They have always something in common, I aver, so that if the lowest of men were to offer an affront to the highest of men, no matter what might otherwise be the disparity, there would be still a substantial parity and proportion betwixt them; whereas between God and man there is such a vast infiniteness of space; God is so far distant from man; the chasm that yawns between the Divinity and mortal is so broad, that no mortal could ever span it. So, when man had once sinned, by the very essence of his nature, he was radically incapable of offering to God a condign or consistent atonement for the wrong he had done. To make due reparation, then, for the injury, and to be reconciled once more to his Creator was not within the compass of man's simple power. Sin had paralyzed him. What likeness or proportion could there be between the All-Powerful, All-Holy God and man, feeble man, 'dust and ashes?' This is the theological basis of the Divine mercy shown in the redemption, as well as the key to the profound gratitude which the idea of the redemption should awaken in the hearts of Christians. Yes, Jesus is our Hope, and more — our Only Hope. There is an infinity,

I repeat, between the Creator and creature to the effect that man could not, when left to himself, by any possibility, lay before God a perfect satisfaction. "In order, then," says St. Thomas, "that satisfaction may be made to God for the sin of man, it is necessary that the one who makes amends should be found at the same time both God and man: God, because a God has been the offended; and man, because it is man who has delivered the offence." We ought to consider deeply the incompetency of human power to atone for even one sin. St. Thomas says 'that sin committed against God entails a certain infiniteness — from the infiniteness of the Divine Majesty.'

An offence is so much the greater according as he is greater against whom we sin. For this reason it is necessary in working out a full satisfaction for sin, that the act of the one who is satisfying should claim an infinite efficacy and power, as being the act namely of one who is at the same time both God and man. We are constantly reminded of this by the saints of God, to whom it was a constant and inexhaustible source of humility, when they came to reflect on the immeasurable and hopeless distance that lay between God and their own naked selves.

It was necessary, as we know from Holy Scripture, that God should offer to justice satisfaction for the sin of Adam. The mere idea bewilders; the method selected overwhelms us. St. Leo says: "Truly that is a mercy of God,

when, to repair the human race, and having other means, at hand, God should especially choose that way of destroying the work of the devil by which He would bring into action not the virtue of His power but the way of His justice." St. Francis de Sales adds: "The sweetness of mercy was embellished by the beauty of justice. God resolved to save man by way of a rigorous redemption. As this redemption could not be wrought out except by His own Son, God set forth that He would ransom man, not by one of those divine actions of love, which indeed were more than sufficient to redeem a million worlds, but rather by all the sufferings which He underwent as far as the memorable death on the cross." It was not in the presence of justice as a friend that Almighty God's mercy appeared. Mercy stood before God as a victim, and cancelled with blood man's full indebtedness to His justice. Mercy took on flesh, and this is Christ, the eternal Son of God. He paid God in full for the sin of man.

It was not love precisely that redeemed mankind. The creation of the world is a manifestation of God's power and God's goodness, but in the Redemption we see more. When Adam sat brooding in his darkness and gloom, a cursed and a doomed man, without any hope of redemption, it was then in a rift of the dark cloud there came a gleam of light. It was the motherly face of mercy, lighting up with hope the sinner's dark bosom. Light shineth in the darkness, and from that hour this hope has never fled from man's

bosom, as it is written by the poet : ‘ Hope springs eternal in the human breast,’ and dates from that day when God, in His mercy, promised the world His Redeeming Son : “ I will put enmity between thee and the woman ”—“ For by a man came death, and by a Man the resurrection of the dead, and as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made live.” It is with the utmost earnestness that I recommend to your meditation the great mercy of God evidenced in this choice of a way—*via justitiæ*—to redeem us. You have witnessed examples of the terror of His justice. Now Jesus Christ presents Himself before that same awful justice and says : “ Visit upon My head the chastisements of justice : I shall bear the penalty of sin, that hope may be brought unto man’s melancholy life and I shall take the punishments for all the sins of mankind from the very beginning of the world unto the end.”

Satan set out from hell and has come into this world of ours simply to contrive to draw man into sin. The devil fancied it would be a shameful blot on the dignity of God, a slur upon His glory, if he could entice man from God’s standard and destroy him forever. God determined in His mercy that wretched man should be forgiven ; that he should be resurrected from his condition, for God said : “ I shall put enmities between thee and the woman, she shall crush thy head.”

The mercy of the redemption is a mystery : as God’s other attributes, it exceeds human measurement. It is larger than the devil’s ability to do

evil. St. Paul says to Titus: "When the goodness and kindness of our Saviour God appeared, not by the works of justice which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us." Why did He evince this mercy to man? He showed no forbearance to angels. It was because He could not suffer the accursed Adam propagating, as father and root thereof, a family of doomed children, a fated race that must perish forever. He moreover considered how artifice and stratagem were employed by Satan to seduce our first parents. The angels, on the contrary, having been independent in their own being, involved no descendants in their fall. Their evil had sprung from within their own hearts. "Self-depraved, and self-tempted" were they. St. Francis de Sales formulates the reasons as follows: "God took into account how the evil and perverse Satan surprised the first man; and considered the greatness of the temptation by which he fell. Now He saw that the whole human race would perish by the fall of one. It was for these reasons He regarded our nature with pity, and resolved to succor us."

Who now will be the instrument to deliver us from the tyrant Satan? Who will free us from our bonds? Who will be our savior? Love demands some one willing, and justice some one able to pay the rigid satisfaction. Man must die, or God's justice must perish. There is only one alternative. God looks out among the heavenly hosts, waiting for the hero to come. Where

is the one who will offer his life in order that man may be saved? Who will redeem man's mortal crime? And the voice of the Son of God awakens the eternal hills: "Behold, I come," and the star falls from heaven o'er Bethlehem and the world answers back the adoring welcome: "Christ Jesus our Hope!" (St. Paul, Chap. i.) Our Divine Lord offers Himself to the Father in atonement for our sins. He mounts the altar steps and lies a victim under the gleaming blade of the Father's wrath. Man, I repeat, cannot satisfy God for his sin. It is necessary that God should offer Himself as the 'red cow' of the Old Law—in which no blemish was found,—was burned for sin,—Whose ashes purified the sinners of Israel.

Our Divine Lord has more than fully satisfied the Father, but He has, nevertheless, left something for us to do. The redemption would be vain, though God died for us; we will not—cannot pluck its fruits, unless we make up in our flesh 'what is wanting to the Passion' of Our Divine Lord. If He redeemed us He has made a treasury; but the application thereof remains with ourselves, and is accomplished by uniting our own satisfactions with those of Christ. We become like Jesus Christ by the satisfactions we offer for sin, and by these satisfactions we have the most secure pledge of glory: "If we suffer with Him we shall be glorified with Him," the Apostle says. All our satisfactions assume their power from the life and death of Jesus Christ.

We have in the Old Law an image of Christ, the Redeemer, and a figure of how our satisfactions, accomplished as Christians, must be applied before we can be saved. Zachary saw a golden candlestick, and it had seven funnels for lights, surmounted by a vase of oil, which fed the flames; and the vase was fed simply by two olive-trees. That candlestick is the Church; those lights are the seven sacraments; the oil in the vase is the Blood of Jesus Christ, and the olive-trees are the satisfactions of Christ, and the satisfactions of men in co-operation with Him. Whatever satisfaction or sanctification; whatever virtue or power we have, comes from Christ. The Lord has done His part, now man must do his. "God created us without our co-operation, but He will not redeem us without it," says St. Augustine. So, in order that we may make satisfaction to the justice of God, we must make a personal application of our own satisfactions to the personal satisfactions of Jesus Christ.

A temerarious reliance on His satisfactions such as shuns co-operation with God, is an abuse of Divine charity, unpardonable ingratitude, and withal shocking imposition. It is a temerity and equivalent breach of our faith so to reckon our satisfactions as to neglect them because of their trifling nature. We despise the little things it is within our power to do, being misled by the false judgment of a portion of the world touching on the value of human actions, — a judgment formed by ignorance or concocted by indolence. Intrin-

sically, our actions may be trifling or even trivial, aye, worthless: "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" queries David. It is true that 'without Me you can do nothing,' admits the Lord. But as when a drop of water is commingled with the chalice of wine, and the two become amalgamated into one; so, the smallest action we perform in the nature of penance, though in itself it be no more than a drop of water, becomes, when we apply it to the Passion of Our Lord, greater in the sight of God than all the deeds of natural heroism performed by the human race past, present, and to come, taken in a group; for, we may, when our smallest action is joined with the action of Our Lord, and is touched by the blood and merits of the redemption—resolved into the laws of sympathy governing the Mystical Body of Christ, say: 'I no longer do it; I—the man, but Jesus Christ doeth it in me.'—"I no longer live," says St. Paul, "but Jesus Christ liveth in me;" or, Of myself I can do nothing, 'but I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me.'

Our Lord prayed for this fruitful union: "Father, that they may be one in me, as Thou in me and I in Thee." Our Lord insists on this union when He tells us we must become 'branches' of the 'vine' in order to bring forth fruit for heaven. If, then, our satisfactions are to be acceptable to God, they must be united with those of Jesus Christ. We must have distilled into our lives the sap, that is the grace of the Lord, and con-

sequently the virtues and merits of Jesus Christ. But, if we neglect penance, Our Lord's life will not save us: "I have chosen you, and appointed you, that you should go, and should bring forth fruit" (John xv. 16). We fancy that because God died for us, He atoned to the justice of God so as nothing should remain for us to do. We must, however, I repeat, unite our own works with God's: "If any one remaineth not in Me, he shall be cast forth as a branch and shall wither; and they shall gather him up and cast him into the fire; and he burneth" (John xv. 6).

To such amongst us as pray and yet fail to practice the virtue of penance, because, as they allege, Christ paid all for us, therefore, what remains for us to do? I say, Our Lord prayed for us as well, that we might all be saved and might not perish; and, yet, if we do not pray we cannot be saved. Though the Lord prayed for us, His prayers will not avail without our prayers. The Master's prayers and ours must be knitted together to become efficacious, that is, to find sure grace and favor before the throne of God. When united the effect of the union is imperishable strength. Though the Lord has done penance, we are not, nor can we be, exempted from the *spirit* and *virtue* of penance. It is, moreover, just as illogical not to do penance, basing your conduct on the ground that Christ has done it, as it would be logical to neglect or omit prayer for the reason that Christ has prayed for us. Now, no one is seen to fancy that he may, with

any degree of safety to his salvation, neglect prayer. And why will a Christian disregard penance?

We have before our eyes the solid fact of the redemption, with the hard way, Our Lord selected to satisfy the claims of justice. In this connection it has been mooted whether Almighty God would have become man, even though mankind had not fallen. In the thinking of some the Incarnation would have still been wrought out. We may say, however, with St. Thomas, that this is not found in Sacred Scripture. The Angelic Doctor adds: "Though God does not restrict Himself to becoming man in case man had sinned, still it remains a fact that God would never have come into this world with a passible body, were it not for the sin of man, though the power of God is not bound down to this." Beyond all dispute, the coming of the Lord in His mortal and passible human nature was to save mankind. This St. Paul tells us: "What might we not expect of Almighty God, Who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up to death for us? Behold, how you have been purchased with a great price." The fact remains after all, that Christ came with that Body which suffered, and which He submitted to His life's ignominies out of the fulness of His mercy and the tenderness of the compassion that burned in His bosom for sinners: "Therefore I suffer all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus

with heavenly glory" (II. Tim. ii. 10). And yet it seems, there is little gratitude or response from the world to the tender mercies of God. The world disowns, as it were, its own guilt and takes the redemption as a most natural thing, — as though the Lord had been obliged to be born and die for us. If so, then God was the sinner, the guilty one, and there was no mercy.

Almighty God was not under obligation, in any sense of His justice, to lay down His life for us. It was the abundance of His own sweet love, that moved Our Lord to sacrifice His precious life to obtain amnesty for us rebels. Again, people take redemption as a matter of course, I say, and pay no compliments to Almighty God; but this time the matter of course springs from the world's pride. They do not so much as say: 'I thank Thee, O God!'

None of us can fathom the mercy of God in the Incarnation. Only God Himself can sound the depths of this mystery. David sought the reason of the redemption. He failed — "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?" The prophet, contemplating his own nothingness, is forced to exclaim: "All my substance is as nothing before Thee!" The mercy of God overreaches human measurement. "Sooner couldst thou recall the days that are gone, sooner couldst thou make green all withered flowers and gather up every drop of rain, than possess the power to measure the love which I bear to thee and all mankind," says Eternal Wisdom by the

lips of Blessed Suso. But those who essay to be moderately grateful, will not fail to offer to the Redeemer, from time to time, little acts of becoming gratitude. Our habitual prayer will be: "That our fastings and all our daily satisfactions may be made efficacious by the grace of God." Let us thank Almighty God for all He has done.

Oh, if we could understand what grace is!—that one grace of God, coming to us through the redemption, for the remission of sin, is greater than the creation of the world. St. Augustine, in reply to the question, whether the prodigy of Divine Omnipotence forgiving but one sin, is less than creating the vast world out of nothing, says: 'that it is greater than the creation of heaven and earth.' And St. Thomas supplies us with an analysis of St. Augustine's conclusion, when he says: "Creation is within the bounds of nature; but, the pardon of the sinner demands justification, and justification calls for grace; grace is above nature, and one grace of God infinitely surpasses the creation of worlds."

Every time we kneel before the altar to witness the Unbloody Sacrifice of God's eternal Son to the Father, let memory recall the words—the vow of Love: "In the head of the Book it is written of Me: Behold, I come to do Thy will"—I come to offer Myself for the sinners of the world: wreak on Me Thy sternest vengeance: the weight of man's iniquities put upon Me; I shall be bruised for them.

Have you conceived the resolve to do penance? Behold, you have your Divine Model Jesus, and the footprints of the Divine Penitent clearly defined. God points to Calvary as He pointed to the Tabernacle—Look!—see the Divine Pattern—‘*Exemplar*,’ and do likewise; copy him! “Be ye imitators of me,” says St. Paul, “as I am of Christ.” Christ is called by the prophets, the Stone—the ‘Chief Stone,’ because, as a gem, to be set, must be cut, so the Lord of Hosts has said: “And I shall grave the graving;” and Our Divine Lord was cut with the lance, the nails, the crowning with thorns, and so put through the rest of the cutting process of His Bloody Passion. He is called the ‘Chief Stone,’ and the ‘Red Stone,’ because He is rose-colored with the blood He has poured out for us. But He must be surrounded with brilliants. There must be concordant gems about Him—jewels worthy of Him. For Our Lord is the ‘Chief Stone,’ therefore not the only stone. Hence there are other, though lesser stones: “If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me.” Who are these other, if less lustrous, jewels? These are the men who do penance, and copy the Divine ‘graving’ of Jesus Christ. We, who by our daily penances, our sufferings and crucifixions, will be cut and polished to surround Him, as so many jewels, and finally be set with Him forever in the Bosom of the Eternal Father.

There is nothing I can find, by way of example, to illustrate the Divine mercy of Christ and man’s

ingratitude, after all that Christ had done for the world, more stirring than the famous little historical episode that occurred in the days of Edward III. A siege had been laid against the city of Calais. The people were stout-hearted, and, with the characteristic sensitiveness of the Latin peoples, would not surrender, though the king kept them inwalled for a long period. They were on the verge of famine, and all the besieged doomed to perish. But foolishness is not bravery, so finally, the people of the city, when the horrid face of starvation glared at them, sent a courier to the king with honorable overtures of compromise. The king sent back word that he would exact six victims to be sent to him to be put to death before he would consent to lift the siege of the unfortunate city. Such were the conditions that gave birth to the heroism of Eustache de St. Pierre, one of the first burghers of Calais. Edward's harsh terms of peace caused general lamentation; and resentment was written on the starved faces of Calais. The people were unwilling to give one victim, much less six, for the ransom. Eustache came forward and made known his determination to go and offer his life to the king in order that his fellow-countrymen might be spared. He said: "I know I can count upon the mercy of my Saviour in offering my life to save the city and so many people." Three of his kinsmen also offered themselves as victims; their example roused up two more volunteers, and away went the six brave patriots

to pay the terrible ransom. They went prepared for their fate. Edward ordered the headsman to be sent in, and the six were on the point of being decapitated, when the wife of the king sought his presence, and implored her liege and lord to show mercy. She pointed to the valor of these men, and witnessed how noble they were to offer their own lives that he might spare the large number of their fellow-citizens. The king relented and spared the six noble lives. Now, let us suppose Eustache as having gone back to Calais, that his countrymen would not recognize him;—dealt with him as an utter stranger, and afterward put him to death, for no other reason than that he loved and suffered for them. Would you not have here an example of the world's dealings with Jesus Christ, Who offered Himself to the Eternal Father to save us from eternal death?

The picture of Eustache seems overcolored, the character of his ill-treatment overdrawn, but Holy Scripture records the brutal treatment of Our Lord, and the foundation of the brutality must be sought down deeper than the human mind—in fiendish hate. How little, I repeat, men thank the Lord for the mercy and heroism of His life. Let me implore you to be grateful, and to thank Him every day of your life for all He has done.

The Master must have been very much pained by the base ingratitude that was shown on that occasion, when He cured the ten lepers. Yet all men were filled with leprosy: yes, we were all

lepers shut out from the blessed vision of God, precluded from the glories of Paradise, as loathsome creatures, driven beyond the walls. Our Lord cured ten lepers, and only one of these returned to thank Him. The Saviour asked, with pathos, if there were not ten cured? Where are the nine others? Have they forgotten My kindness? Now, beloved brethren, how many amongst us send up to the Blessed Redeemer gratitude at all consistent with the pains, sufferings, ignominious life and violent death He underwent to save us, gratitude truly such and not merely puerile sentiment, solid works of love, sympathy and atonement. How many people look upon God as their liberator? How many realize, that were it not for the death of the Son, no man would ever witness the vision of the Father? And yet, this is the corner-stone of all our salvation.

You do not perhaps understand how the saints could humble themselves to the dust, and think they were unworthy of the things God had done for them, yet their piety is not overdone. The foundation lies in their realizing the fact, that God is God and man is man. We do not. Our piety is underdone. No matter how great the saint—even the Holy Mother of God could not have rescued us, immaculate as she is, the glory of mankind. No, brethren, not even the holy and unspotted Mother of God could offer consistent satisfaction for our sins without the death of her Son. Let us, I say, be grateful. It is hard to grant favors to one who is ungrateful, as our own experience

persuades us ; but when we express our gratitude it must move God to bestow more readily and plentifully new favors upon us. If the leper who returned thanks, were to ask another favor, would not Our Lord give it more quickly to him than to those ungrateful wretches who went their way and cast to the winds the memory of His former kindness? We could not go in cold blood to ask God for fresh favors, when we did not so much as thank Him for His past ones. I thank Thee, Almighty God, for what Thou hast done for me. This is the corner-stone of our piety, and the solid hope of our future prayers. Again, if you will only realize that your sufferings without God's are useless ; that you, my brethren of to-day, cannot, of yourselves, satisfy for sin any more than Adam, in his day ; that you are, like him, finite, and that all mankind without exception are so ; that He is the Infinite, thrice-holy God, and that we before Him are but grains of dust ! The work of man's redemption is a divine and pure mercy. If it were not for that mercy, I repeat, man could not be saved. The greatest efforts of human endeavor were too weak and helpless to lift the weight of the sinner and appease the justice of God. When we view the sign of the cross gleaming on the steeples of our churches and gables of our schools, our convents and academies, does it—shall it remind us of the Hero Who laid down His life to save the City of God? Is the Crucifix hanging upon the panel of our chamber-walls in all our homes? Does the marble or pictured Face look

down upon us, and greet us awaking? Ah, how many come to the Master's grave in daily meditation? How many spread flowers in memory sweet over His tomb—flowers of saintly thought and noble resolve? How many remember what the Master endured for the world? How many witness in deeds that Jesus Christ was and is the Saviour of the world? How many, I ask—the few that are chosen! Am I of the Chosen? Let us then be found in the ranks of the Chosen, quietly resting in the scars of the wounded Master, as the robin in the branches of the tree. In the storms of life they are near and we shall go into them—the nests which we shall have builded—the wounds of Christ. Here we shall find safe shelter and daily food and drink for the soul always. The bird flits from tree to tree. It never quits its shadow. We, too, shall go from duty to duty; from the Lord to the Lord, but all our extra life shall find its source, its progress and expansion, its accomplishment within the shadow of the passion and death of Our Lord. Let us regret the past and be resolved for the future, as David: “I shall sing forever the mercies of the Lord.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE LAST FARTHING.

ALL things must end. All things must pass away; and this law of creation touches the beautiful life of our blessed and adorable Master. "*Consummatum est*,"—it is finished: it is achieved: all is accomplished. Now Our Lord, upon His Throne of the Cross, majestic in His grief, surveying His life—He did not have to look far, for with God there is no past nor future, but all is present—soliloquizes: Have I left any debt unpaid? Is there anything wanting to the redemption of man that I have not discharged? He looks: all is accomplished! I have paid to the justice of the Father the full indebtedness for the sins of the human family. He had run the gamut of earthly affliction, from the first note struck in weak accents of childish prattle in the damp grotto, to the highest on top of the mountain, faintly whispered by the dying God in the awful cadenza of His life, that died away in the hush of death. From Bethlehem to Golgotha! From the cavern to the cross! The last thing, and the hardest, is to die. His frame quivers ere He reaches it, for, herein lies the severest retribution upon sin; herein lies in its full weight the sense, though vicarious, of guilt,— "The wages of sin is death." But Our Divine Saviour

must die. He has finished all His trials and completed the allotted measure of His sufferings as far as this, the last one of all — death.

Progress has been His motto throughout His whole life. To advance higher and yet higher: "And the child grew and waxed strong, full of wisdom" (Luke ii. 40;) from penance to greater penance; and the last act of His life was to be the greatest of all His sufferings: "The path of a just man is like a shining light that goeth forward and increaseth unto the perfect day." Do you assent to the principle of St. Bernard that in the spiritual life not to advance is to go backward? Few begin badly. Many have begun with something grand, heroic; but how have they ended? Yet, the end crowns the work, and only he shall be crowned who has indeed touched the goal. Look at the tide,—how it advances and recedes: It does not long stand still. It has a message for us. The souls that in the way of virtue show themselves indifferent to perfection and affect to stand still, cannot in reality do so very long. Either they must go onward, or the tide of grace will go out from them; and what is human nature when the tide of grace has receded from the soul? A stagnant pool, with acres of pestilential mud, that emit befouling vapors and the germs of death! We may fancy we are not going backward; but, prithee, know that the collapse in the spiritual life does not come about quickly; it comes stealthily upon us; the devil does not want us to know it, — he

is the prince of darkness : “ *Vigilate!* watch out,” said Christ—feed and trim your lamps. If for a long time we have led a good life, we do not fall suddenly, but, little by little, in the same way as we ordinarily acquire virtue. The soul stands in need of constant mending. Then, in our penances, let ‘Excelsior’ be our motto. Expand daily : — “Be ye holy as your Heavenly Father is holy.” Let us be resolved to advance daily, and we shall not recede.

Our Divine Lord reaches at last the summit, the great climax of His life, in His magnificent and heroic death. In that brilliant climax that caps the tragedy of the redemption, He touches the highest pitch that God can reach in unveiling heaven’s love to earth, in displaying to the creature the justice and mercy of God.

A God to die ! How terrible must be His justice ; how infinite His love ! Justice did not spare Him — ‘Who did not spare His Son.’ We fancy there ought to be fewer nails to penetrate and tear the adorable flesh. We think one drop of blood ought to suffice. But, each wound of lance, and ragged burrough of nail is like a rent in the heavens, through which the mercy and justice of God appear and shine resplendent. The deeper the iron penetrates, the deeper we go into God’s justice : the wider the gaping wound, the wider broaden the rifts in the clouds by which God’s attributes are the more abundantly shown to man.

Our Lord had begun in sorrow : He now ends in sorrow. His life has been one unending sor-

row. Like as in the great ocean where every drop has something of the salt, so, nothing in Our Lord's life was without its meed of bitterness. Bethlehem had its hardships, Nazareth its fatiguing manual labors, where Jesus toiled with the toiler; Jerusalem was the theatre of His laborious public ministry, with its exhausting eloquence and tiresome journeys afoot. He slept with the homeless on the hillside, for 'the Son of Man had not whereon to lay His head.' He shared the confusion of the bridal pair, when the wine failed at Cana. He wept for His friend at the tomb of Lazarus. He sorrowed with the sorrowful, and shared the grief of His mourning friends, — with Mary and Martha at the grave of their brother, and with the widow of Naim by the side of her son's coffin. All these were instalments on the 'great price' justice demanded for our ransom. From the bottom of the scale to the top, every note of suffering was round, full and clear. There was no shirking, no holding back, no sparing Himself — only the abandon of uncontrollable love and mercy for mankind. He might have redeemed us by one tear, one groan, one prayer; by His circumcision, when His blood trickled down His tender limbs; by the slightest humiliation. But no: He will satisfy justice to the full extent. In the redemption, Christ rose to the highest pitch of divinest love. Oh, yes, God so loved the world! The Master could not show greater love. He tells us so: "No man can show greater love than to lay

down his life for his friend." True, He could have shown greater power than He has, but not greater love. The blood of holocausts did not please the Father; then He said: "Behold, I come to do Thy will." Our Divine Lord, in accepting this bloody death, not being willing in the enthusiasm of His love to rescue us by a sigh, shows us the incomprehensibility of justice and the length and breadth and depth and height of His benignity and mercy.

The death of the Master was not, in itself, a single action. It was only a part of that act which we call the 'life of Jesus.' It was the last syllable in the word—Redemption. There was the same characteristic in life and in death: both bear the impress of suffering and penance offered for sin. There was no difference between the life and the death of Our Divine Saviour. Can the same be said of us? Is our death of penance only a continuation or culmination of our life of penance; or, is it not true, that we live impenitent and expect to die penitent? We shall die just as we shall have lived. If people live on and care nothing for the salvation of their souls, if they do not heed the 'one thing necessary,' they cannot expect to die otherwise than in their sins. Every word, every thought, every breath of Christ, was but a part of that one grand action—His life; a splinter of the 'tree of life,' the cross. To die is an act of the living. So it is with us. We begin to die as soon as we are born. What we call living is dying: life is a

death-struggle. They should be of the same character. We can reasonably expect to die only as we shall have lived — ‘hope fixed to an uncertain hour is vain, and we know not the hour.’

How grand is the death of Our Divine Lord! He is not obliged to die — it is a free act of pure mercy and love. Christ could not show greater love. He was offered up because it was His will, — “Behold, I come to do Thy will,” and His Father said: “For the iniquities of My people have I struck Him.” Our Lord, looking back, gasps: “It is finished.” I have paid everything due, up to the end. He had been mocked, scourged, dubbed a fool, but He had not paid all yet. The wages of sin is — death! One more farthing for the sins of the world — the end. And what is it, Father? Death! It is all over now. The Beloved Master has paid the Eternal Creditor the last farthing of the ‘great price.’ The last wrinkle of wrath on the brow of His Father is smoothed.

The Master’s death was most peaceful, with the peace of duty well done; with the peace of holiness, the imperishable peace of virtue. He had accomplished all; there is nothing further to be done! “Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.” “As the path of a just man,” I repeat, “is like a shining light going forward to perfect day,” so was Our Lord’s life. It went on from Bethlehem to Calvary. It grew like the light to the midday splendor; and the crimson

glories of the dying day are like the scarlet beauties of the Bloody Passion, spread over the glorious evening of Our Lord's precious life. Our Lord was never so beautiful as when He was dying; for, from that pale Face there shone that great love, the most abundant testimony of which He was now giving, for 'greater love than this no man hath, to lay down his life for his friends.' The dying for us tells how the Master loved the world. He dies with the tranquillity that follows battle—not with the false peace of surrender. The latter is not true peace. Peace is where there is domination; the peace that follows the struggles of war, and the joy of the soldier returning—a conqueror.

"I go to the Father." Ah, yes, this is the penitent's death, whose life has been one of penance, whose debts are all paid to God. This was the peace of Our Lord's blessed Soul: "Father, I have conquered the world." Think of the humiliation of Christ's death. Had it been simply in His Mother's house, where she might have knelt beside His bed, kissed His throbbing temples, looked into His eyes, and comforted His dying moments by telling Him of her immaculate love, and how she adored Him; if He were surrounded even by His disciples, who could swear to Him their devotion, their love and their promise to carry His name to the Nations; the humiliation that God's Son had died would have been enough. But, He must die between two thieves, and die with the brand of a criminal,

that we may be free. Did the world know that this was the Son of God? Human depravity and iniquity reaches its highest pitch in the death of Jesus Christ. The world, the synagogue, and the throne: the cowardly State, deluded churchmen,—sectaries, not followers of Christ,—and the fallen priest: Pilate, Caiaphas and Judas, are immediately responsible for the murder of the Lord. His enemies then, are His enemies now. God used this, the maximum of man's guilt, as an instrument to exhibit the full glories of His mercy: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

There was darkness from the sixth to the ninth hour. The Sun was ashamed and hid his face from such a cruel scene. The very elements felt the shock of that death. Denis, the Aeropagite, felt the event in distant Athens. There were earthquakes; the dead rose up, and we may still further believe, with the pious Emmerich, that Zachary, Simon the Just, and Jeremiah, came forth from the gates of the sanctuary, as the veil of the temple was rent in twain. "Let us go out from this place," cried a voice from heaven, as the awakened prophets walked forth. This was the grand climax, the most beautiful and impressive scene ever presented to mortal eye.

Our Lord died, not for one person, but for the world; He died for all: "Preach the gospel to every creature." He was born outside of any home, so that no family could claim Him—the

world was His home. He died under His Father's roof, the sky: "Giving Himself in redemption for all." "He offered Himself up as a propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins, but the sins of the whole world." He excluded no one, Judas Iscariot, Pilate, or Caiaphas, but said for all: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

How shall we die? What will be our feelings when we stand before those gates of death about to swing open, that we may pass on to eternal life? Hear the commingled soliloquy and pathetic apostrophe of the great Bossuet before the face of death. How full of sweet peace and the strong hope of Christ's death; the peace of victory, and the hope of reward. Can you make these words your own, with the same serenity of hope and peace as he? How grand and pathetic! Methinks, as I hear His soul's communings, that I am within the tent of some valiant and sturdy old soldier, who says his farewell to the world, and tells of the noble and virtuous expectation that thrills his dying warrior-bosom:

"My senses grow dim," says he, "my life is vanishing. Soon others shall come and take my place. 'Yonder is his chamber,' they will say: 'there is his bed,' and they shall find me there no more. How sad! aye, had I indeed no hopes; yet, if all about me perish, I am going thither where dwelleth my All. Thou, God Omnipotent, Eternal One, God of happiness, I rejoice in Thy power, in Thy eternalness, and in Thy happiness.

When shall I behold Thee, O Light, O Good Supreme, O Source of Goodness? Thou, the only Good One, Who art the only One, Who art All, in Whom I shall be, Who shalt dwell in me, Who shalt be everything unto everyone, with Whom I shall blend in one spirit. When shall I behold Thee, O Thou Beginning, Who never hadst beginning? When shall I enjoy the vision of Thy Son, emerging from Thy bosom, Who is Thine equal? When shall I enjoy the rapture of beholding Thy Holy Spirit proceeding from Your union and touching the limit of Your fecundity? Silence! thou, my soul; not another word! Wherefore wilt thou go on in thy broken accents and staggering voice, now that the Truth is about to address thee?"

How did he expect Truth would address him? In these words: "Come, thou beloved of my Father." Foreknowing the sanctity of God and our record, are we ready to take our place among the blessed spirits, with a full consciousness of all that God asks of us?—the same spotlessness, the same unblemished soul that we find in the delicate babe, just dripping from the baptismal font—a human angel with folded wings. Has penance purified you by a second baptism?—"Receive this white garment that thou mayest carry it without stain before the judgment seat of God." Is your soul to-day as pure as it was then? When you stand before Death will your feelings be akin to those of your Divine Saviour? If you have lived like Him, the life of a penitent, and

died like Him on the Cross, then you may expect to enter with Him into glory.

By the death of Our Divine Lord we are released from the yoke of the devil. We sometimes fancy it is our own flesh and blood that torments us, when in truth it is the devil, under our window. He carries the keys of hell, as St. Peter does those of heaven. All mortal conditions favor the evil spirit—the flesh and the world. Our Divine Lord, by His death, overcame the principalities and powers of hell,—“And divesting principalities and powers, He made a show of them confidently, triumphing over them in Himself. (Gall. 11, 15.) The devil still has a certain power over man, by tempting him and assailing him with annoyances. There is still idolatry in the world; therefore, it would seem as though Christ had not really overcome the powers of hell; but, St. Thomas meets this objection as follows: “It is impossible to deny that even in our day, by the permission of God, the devil can attack the souls of men by temptations and by tormenting their bodies; that he can, moreover, give them trouble by lying signs, deceptive machinations, and wonders; but the Passion of Christ furnishes man with the remedy by which he can defend himself and escape eternal death. This remedy existed, not only after, but before the Passion of Christ, and all those who before the Passion resisted the devil, drew from the Passion of Jesus Christ, the force and the power to do so successfully.” We have still upon earth

the idols of our passions, yet we have a power against them in the Cross. In the Cross of Christ is the very poison of sin, death. We are inoculated by it, and by its virus we are saved from the poison of the serpent's bite.

We have been reconciled to the Father by the death of His Son. The document consigning man to everlasting death was washed out by the current of the Saviour's Blood flowing from the Cross, as St. Paul says—"Blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us; the same He took away, fastening it to the Cross."

It is not enough to stop sinning, for, newness of life is part of penance. We first weigh anchor and then set sail. Christ told the sinful woman to go and sin no more, but He supposed she would do penance. The temporal punishment remains after forgiveness.

We must model our lives upon Our Lord's own life. Let our life and death be but one act.

Let us read everything in this world by the lamp that hangs from the skies, the Body of Jesus Christ on the Cross: "Death is all philosophy." The ancients epitomized all philosophy in death, or a meditation on death. But the death of Jesus Christ is all Christian philosophy. Says the prophet: "My loins are filled with illusions." There will be no illusions in death, for death is a shedding of illusions. "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity," exclaimed Solomon. We recall the illusions of childhood as they are dispelled by the growing years, when the playthings

of infancy, as dolls, seemed living things — the toys, the vapid ambitions, and hollow judgments on the real in truth and greatness, now disillusioned. When we were youths, the outward semblances we fancied to be symptoms: the long or prolific locks seemed learning and art, and the faultless Grecian lines and clear face were to us signs of spirituality and virtue. Then in youth, the thoughtless period of our life, we loved fiction above philosophy or history. Where now there is light, things are perceived as they are. In darkness we cannot see, and are deceived: "I am the Light: He that followeth after Me walketh not in darkness." In the light of death the creations of our fancy will fade away and the reality alone shall live. St. Paul says: "We shall see Him as He is," so shall we see things for the first time as they are. Our Lord says, "I am the Way." And what way? The Way of the Cross: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. He that followeth Me walketh not in darkness." Follow Me in the way of the cross and you shall have life. We ought to make the life of Jesus our study and meditation. Walk in the Light!

"I am the Way." Yes, and if we meditate the Way of the Cross, Christ's kingdom shall flourish in us. A kingdom implies obedience. We must follow the commands of our suffering King, spoken aloud in death. If we do so, Isaiah will enumerate the blessings that must follow: "The land that was desolate and impassable shall

be glad: and the wilderness shall rejoice with joy and praise: the glory of Libanus is given to it: the beauty of Carmel and Saron." There will be no darkness, brethren, in our souls, if we meditate and imitate Our Crucified Lord, for He is 'The Light.' St. Paul's teaching is all summed up in 'Jesus Christ Crucified.' No darkness, I say, with Isaias, will take the truth from us: "They shall see the glory of the Lord and the beauty of Our God." No, the daily meditation on the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ will expose to us the false beauties of this world and reveal the true beauties of God and virtue. Salvation is difficult of accomplishment. At times we shudder at its cost, and fear we shall not be able to meet all our obligations to God and our soul; but we have 'a way out of our straits,' — the contemplation of Our Lord on the Cross: "Strengthen ye the feeble hands and confirm the weak knees: say to the faint-hearted, take courage and fear not: behold, your God will bring the revenge of recompense: God Himself will come and will save you." Ah, no; there will be no deception of us by the hypocrisy of creatures, once we have begun to dwell in Jesus Christ at Calvary: "Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened: and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped." Yes, we shall find in His Heart the grace of the light and the grace of the strength to follow it; the grace to know and the grace to do God's will: "Then shall the lame leap as a hart: and the tongue of the dumb shall

be free: for waters are broken out in the desert, and streams in the wilderness. And that which was dry land shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water." We shall indeed get rid of our coldness to God and our indifference to salvation. We shall no longer go to confession and communion like the snail, dragging our legs after us, but we shall bound like the hart and the panther after the cool stream. We shall cast off the yoke of the tyranny of Satan. Our souls will no longer be haunts of vice and rendezvous of the evil spirits, of Lust, of Avarice, of Pride, and the rest of the devil's cubs: "In the dens where dragons dwelt before, shall rise up the verdure of the weed and the bulrush." God promised us, brethren, a sure way to heaven: "And a path and a way shall be there, and it shall be called the holy way: the unclean shall not pass over it, and this shall be unto you a straight way, so that fools shall not err therein." "I am the Way," says Jesus Christ Crucified: "No lion shall be there; nor shall any mischievous beast go up by it nor be found there; but they shall walk there that shall be delivered." The chosen of God, the predestinated must follow in the footprints of Our Lord Crucified: "And the redeemed of the Lord" — those who study, meditate and imitate the Redeemer — "shall return and shall come to Sion with praise; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away." (Isaias, Ch. xxxv.)

St. Paul reminds us, Our Lord's death will be a witness against us: "You will not have chastisements. Ye are bastards and not sons of God." The man who will not do penance is a semblance of God's son: he bears the name, he is so in outward appearance, but he is not so in reality. "Look at Christ, the Son of God, Who did penance. Think diligently on Him Who endureth such opposition from sinners against Himself, that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds. We are chastised for our profit: God loves those whom He chastiseth." St. Paul further tells us, if it were necessary on our part we should resist, so to speak, even unto blood. Have we done so? Beloved brethren, Christianity is, as far as practice, in a state of decay: The days of Paul are gone, and night is on. Methinks, the Judgment Day is nigh! Oh, for the true faith of Paul, that rather than commit a sin would, as it were, sweat drops of blood like Jesus Christ. Our Lord will come one day with a cloud of witnesses—the Judgment Day: "The Lord will come in the clouds;" that is to say, in the midst of those valiant souls who did penance; and the Lord Himself will be our judge and chief witness. His scars and bruises will rebuke our softness and effeminacy. He has gone before us, and He invites us to follow on: "If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me."

On the way to the Catacombs, there is an inscription marking the spot where St. Peter met

Our Lord. There was persecution in Rome, and St. Peter, not having the courage to give up his life, was in the act of leaving the city. Our Lord, with shouldered cross, met him on the road, and St. Peter recognizing Him, said with trembling voice: "Whither goest Thou, Master, thus bearing Thy cross?" And the pathetic reply came back to him: "I am going back to Rome to be crucified again." Let not this be our rebuke. Let our crucifix be our inspiration.

St. Bonaventure went one day to St. Thomas and asked the great Doctor to have a look at his books. St. Thomas led him over to his crucifix, which bore the marks of tears, the feet of which were almost kissed away. So, St. Bennet said when dying: "Give me my book. Give me my book!" His crucifix had been his one book, his faithful companion during life, and he wanted it in death. We cannot all be like St. Francis of the Cross, who walked with a cross upon his shoulders to the Holy Land and back; but we can do a little penance.

Now the curtain is to fall upon the life of Our Divine Lord. As the dead form of the Master hangs upon the horizon, we behold the grandest scene ever presented to mortal or divine eyes. Sculptors may deal with chisel, and painters with brush, to portray the idea of justice and mercy. In vain do they picture hell with its red flames, to convince the world how terrible God's justice is. In vain will they do anything more than copy the dead form of Jesus Christ, that tells the world you

‘have been purchased at a great price.’ Jesus hangs for us. The sordid interests of Judas, his hideous treason, the hell-born envy of the Jews, and the base human respect or political ambition of Pilate, were but the weapons Love chose to show us how much God hated our sins and loved us sinners.

Nineteen hundred years ago this happened, but Our Lord’s death is none the less for us. St. Paul tells us this: though Almighty God dies for all men, He dies as much for each one of us, as He died for all. God loved *me* and delivered Himself up for *me*. Do you not know that in Holy Communion He is whole and entire under each particle; so, the death of Our Divine Saviour, though for all is for each one of us. We should know that this is the principle with which we should look upon Christ’s death, to pluck its choicest fruits from the tree of the cross. We should make it *personal*; for, St. Paul says: “He loved *me* and gave Himself up for *me*.” (Gall. 11, 20.)

The world does not receive Him as the Son of God. The world is scandalized in His death. They say that if He were indeed, the Son of God, He would have saved Himself. This is what the mob said nineteen hundred years ago: “If He be the Son of God, let Him come down from the cross.” Our Lord refutes the error by the prophet: “I am, I am the Lord: and there is no other Saviour.” (Isaias xliii, 11.)

The hour of deliverance approaches. Banished from God, shut out from Heaven! — so must the

world remain in exile until that hour when Jesus Christ shall have died. "Until the death of the High Priest who shall be at that time. Then shall the deer-slayer return and go into his own city and house from whence he went." (Joshua xx, 6.) "Who is this High Priest," asks St. Ambrose, "unless the Son of God, the Word of God, Whose advocacy we have before the Father." "Why at the death of the pontiff?" asks Theodoret. "Because the death of the pontiff, according to the order of Melchisedech, was the absolution of the sins of men," is his reply.

There is nothing that will be a stronger witness, nothing that should give us greater fear, or greater hope, than Christ on the cross: Fear, I say, for, can we avow with the ancients, gazing on the corpse of the slain; "our hands did not shed this blood." (Joshua xx;) Hope, also I say: "Be merciful to Thy people, Israel, whom Thou hast redeemed, O Lord, and lay not innocent blood to their charge, in the midst of Thy people, Israel, and the guilt of blood shall be taken from them, and Thou shalt be free from the innocent's blood that was shed, when Thou shalt have done what the Lord hath commanded Thee." (Deut. xxi.)

The denouement of the tragedy is incomprehensible. Unitarians do not accept the death of a God-man, yet how singularly Christ is before all eyes. Again if Our Lord were no more than a man there would be no redemption. John the Baptist laid down his pure life; martyrs of untainted baptismal innocence of life, have died

victims of faith and love for God and their fellow-men; yet, the world does not dream of any other redeemer than Christ: aye, because His death was the death of a God. Let us ask of Almighty God the true spirit, that He may be our Divine Model, that we may follow Him through field and mire, faithful to Him. If we follow in the Way of the Cross we will rise with Him. Let us, then, not stop until we shall lay down our cross where Christ laid His down,—on Golgotha, and where we will surrender our souls unto Our Heavenly Father, in the sweet calm peace of a summer evening.

CHAPTER VII.

MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR HIS SINS.

THE choice of an evil path lies with ourselves. To assign the authorship of our bad deeds to Our Maker, beyond the point of bare permissiveness : To affect boldly to render God accountable alike for the treachery of Judas and the vocation of Paul would mean the abrogation of all religiousness in ourselves, whilst it would stun, with its blasphemous boldness, the normal sensibilities of just men, independent of the fact that such a vicious doctrine had been passed upon by the anathema of the Church at Trent.

Adorable in His holiness God is, and must be. Whilst the moral evils of the world lie under His gaze, in all their ghastliness, God suffers no diminution of His infinite sanctity. His antipathy to evil is never brought down from its pure summit. Upon the evil-doer now, as of yore, His wrath is borne in with the mortal sharpness of Sinai's sword of lightning, the stubborn fury of the deluge and the deadliness of the fire and brimstone that fell in showers on Sodom, if we only knew. Toward evil His is a heart of adamant, whilst to the sinner it is soft as fleece. God's light shines with equal radiance upon the just and the unjust ; upon the gentle lamb of goodness and the poisonous reptile of evil. To use or

abuse the power God gives us is ours; for, we are grandly free. God's earth will bear the cockle; at her breast will it drink the strength of its subsistence, side by side with the wheat. But God disowns the evil—"An enemy hath done this," and yet permits it: "Let both grow until the harvest." (Matt., xiii., 28-30.)

God has placed before us good and evil, life and death: His light shows us the way; but it does not prompt us to evil, nor move us on. By no means may it compel us. The light of heaven that shines upon our evil way has no share in our moral actions, but in silence stares, and shall bear witness of our election. Our will is free.

The marauder will not charge his midnight depredations, nor the libertine his lewdness, nor the drunkard his orgies, to the pale and dumb moon. It pours its quiet beams into their chambers as well. It lighted up the way to chapel, home and temperate slumber. God foresees the harassing spectacle of red assassination, the shameless harlotage that traffics in uncleanness, the world's fetid pollution to the end. His prophetic omniscience unveiled the picture of the future, with all its lights and shades, yet He is not neutral—He clearly foresaw, but predestinates none of these things. What more could He have done, or do, to check evil, and not lay violent hands on human liberty; for, by soft pleading, by more forcible counsel, by stern commandment, and by terrible threats, He has always dissuaded the sinner from evil and impending doom. But

whether it be in His justice or in His love, God's glory must be promoted by man's liberty. Perverse, selfish, one-sided, man, I know, questions the value of this liberty, because of his own cowardice in the face of virtue, and calculates only the possibility of damnation. But the rapturous beauties of God's love spread out before the glorified vision of our hope, now bursting into glad song, now melting into gladder silence of eternal adoration, or the terrible beauties of His justice, resolving itself into a million shapes of variegated and eternal torture in the dread abyss—His love or His justice—which? 'Tis thy right and privilege to do so. Choose, man!

In the two attributes of love and justice God is equally adorable. Elect thy way, abide the consequences of thy free election. Choose Love and Love's dwelling,—heaven, and 'virtue' will be the test of the election; or choose Justice and her troublous abode at the easy but terrible cost of 'sin.' God's glory will accrue from either choice and all things. Out of the very shadow of Adam's sin, the Star of Bethlehem rose up and faces of light looked down upon the darkened earth, as angel lips told in song the coming of the Light of the World. God transformed the cruelties of their persecutors into the shining glories of the martyrs and the triumphs of virtue. Now He turns the injustices, cruelties and adversities of our life into instruments that fashion us into saints. The wrongs we do are but our own; for, not on towers of stone nor on the fated grandeur

of Solomon's temple, nor on habitations of wood, did those hot and blessed tears fall, that rolled out of those sweet and tender eyes of the Master as He looked from a neighboring hill upon Jerusalem, His body trembling with the emotion of His grief: Jerusalem! Jerusalem!

Not, I say, on the senseless steeple doomed to near ruin, nor on the ancient streets and lanes soon to feel the impress of blood and carnage; not on the unthinking brutes, nor upon the whole scene that filled the physical eye, did this heaven of grief break out as it were in torrents of tears; but, upon the vast and boundless city of the Jerusalem of the world. Upon the world's guilt it burst forth in majestic pity—your sins and mine included in the mass of iniquity from Eve's consent till the last human thought, for a lasting testimony of God's love, a pledge of His compassion and of His deep and unflagging *aversion* to sin. To blasphemous effrontery too, is added consummate cowardice when man will lay directly or by insinuation upon the shoulders of the Lord—'the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world'—the responsibilities of his own evils.

It is not brave to offend God, but rather ingratitude, rank injustice and moral cowardice. It is honorable to stand up in the Courts of the Lord and with manly and virtuous contrition admit our guilt; for, there is a sure power, force and charm in truth which God cannot resist. It would spoil a true boy's chivalry to lay upon a playmate the responsibility of a prank or folly at school. A

knave it is who commits a large crime, lays it at a neighbor's door and calmly watches him led to prison or the gallows.

Who shall lay upon a loving, all holy and just God the cause of his sins? Who shall tell the purple stripes on the back and shoulders of Jesus Christ and listen to the thought that He deserved them for His own sins, or fancy that God was the author of them? "Which of you shall accuse Me of sin?" Who shall say that God countenances evil, or connives at iniquity, because He suffers human liberty, if but one man use it aright, or if even none shall be found qualified for salvation owing to their abuse of it?—"Let no man when he is tempted say that he is tempted of God; for God is not a tempter of evils, and he tempteth no man. But every man is tempted, being drawn away by his own concupiscence and allured." (St. James, 1, 13.)

St. Basil pertinently observes: "The man who asserts there is no God, is duly adjudged void of all mind and prudence. The same is to be said of the equally stupid individual who should say that God is the cause of evils; for, these two, I verily believe, commit an identical offence,—the former when he holds that God simply does not exist, the latter when he states that God is not good; for if He is the author of wicked things verily He is not good, wherefore in the two instances there is clearly a negation of God." Are we sensible of the tremendous responsibilities of our wicked actions? Say if it be a full con-

sciousness or but a dreamy, half-realization. That we are responsible as men for our actions is beyond dispute. Were this not so, we are reputed unpunishable by the laws of State and qualified as insane. The faintest reflection on your sanity would fret your feelings. You freely agree to all consequences of your human actions as they affect this world. But has not some elfish spirit whispered to you that you could not help the sins you committed? Responsible before men, not responsible before God; sane before the tribunals of earth, insane before the judgment seat of God. Are you aware that you are answerable for your sins; or, tainted by the latest trick of the age, do you affect to hide from God, as you hide from fallible earthly judges, and vainly strive to conceal your guilt and perversity under the gauze of affected insanity and self-delusion?

Irresponsible! Aye, the devil's new opiate to the conscience, but impotent to soothe, and a certain excitant of more grewsome horrors. God knows the truth. He will judge if we be responsible and in how far we are so — "Thou wouldst easily detect what I conceal," says David to God. We may deceive ourselves, but self-deception does not render us irresponsible nor unpunishable.

The blind man of Quinquagesima Sunday was cured of his blindness. — "Ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise." Do we not love our blindness, and foster it, and refuse all remedy for removing it? — "Lord, that I may see." Who, then, is

responsible for our blindness and the certain fall into perdition? Ourselves.

We are free. Upon the foundation of our liberty we rear a structure of holiness which we, by God's ordination, may call our own. Being free, we choose. With our choice of good or evil eventuates merit or demerit, reward or retribution, a kingdom or servitude, life or death. Choose we must. No man can serve two masters.

O Liberty, thou art double-edged, and hence twofold in thy might!—equal to cut a path to glory or to do the bloody deed of self-destruction. But who shall blame the weapon of the suicide? Unless God permits evil He must abolish our liberty, and lo, the sad spectacle of unfree service, actions without merit, the soul without sanctity and no glory from man unto God. The groans and curses of the reprovèd souls will revile the liberty they so abused, but hymns of laud and gratitude to God will ring through the courts of beatitude, for the liberty of the human will that won for myriad souls the laurel of true glory in Sion.

The health that by its abuse furnished the physical power employed in the sins of the gormandizer, the drunkard and the libertine, by its wise disposition, has become the help and instrument of piety, penance, temperance and chastity, the glory of God and of saints; for, man can consecrate or desecrate God's bounteous gifts.

The same key of angelic liberty opened the door to the wicked and rebellious spirits of

heaven, and locked forever in glory the angels that stood ; for, the angels themselves held the key.

In vain we look without for the source of our sins and follies. The will of a man is a holy of holies, a citadel where no one may enter by violence and dethrone the freedom of our actions. Lucifer, in the fullest blaze of glory, wisdom and strength, could not compel consent from Beelzebub or Belial. Their free consent alone drew upon them the catastrophe of voluntary rebellion, and their share in the vengeance of God on the great arch-rebel.

Though it woo and plead and threaten, sin cannot enter the soul till our will, in queenly authority, order the gates unbarred. The good angels were not more free nor less so than the winged rebels who coveted the very throne of Jehovah, and were banished from heaven.

The prophecy of Simeon defends liberty and warns us against the abuse of God's gifts. He held the Child Jesus in his quivering arms, and in a low voice, broken with age, but with solemn vigor, his venerable lips announced that the Child was set up for 'the rise and fall of many in Israel.' To such as embrace Christ's principles and follow in His ways, He is a blessing. For those who turn from Him and freely elect the broad way, God's vows against evil ones, He spoke by Simeon's trembling lips, God shall keep, when liberty shall, by man's own perverse will, have turned into poison. Listen to the words of

Our Lord. How ready and eager to forgive; how tenderly He tells of His love! See His Sacred Heart wax full with His mercy and then hear the heavy sigh as He despairs of our perverse will, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee! How often would I have gathered together thy children as the hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and *thou wouldst not.*"

The Master would have us, if we will, near His heart, there to be warmed near the fires of His eternal love; and yet, we will compel Him to pour out upon us the vials of His wrath, to be concealed in the bosom of His justice till the 'great day.' Yes, till then we are free — O liberty, in thee I rise or fall!

"Unless ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood ye shall not have life in ye."

The sacrament of the altar meant life or damnation to the Apostles. They were free to accept or reject, to eat or decline the Supper. Upon His uttering the doctrine many Jews withdrew from Jesus as their fancy wove visions of mangled flesh. The Master did not coerce them, within or without. He left them their full freedom. The Apostles were free. Jesus asked them their choice, "Do you wish to go?" Life and death were in the balance. Man's own free will must touch the scale that determines his fate — "the rise or fall of many in Israel."

It was a dreadful moment for Peter and his companions. Jesus declares their freedom to

choose. They knew they were responsible for either eternity—the sad one or the happy. Peter and his partners chose freely Jesus and the faith.—Happily or unhappily, indeed, we are wisely free.

Neither must we lay the culpability of our offences upon our neighbor. In vain did Eve avow the serpent did beguile her. Willing, forsooth, to subscribe to the deed, but earnestly laying the blame of her actions upon the serpent. But Eve was free, and God knew no power could have forced her will. Freely she disobeyed God, and justly to this day the groans of our mothers, whilst they bring us forth, constantly remind us of our mother's voluntary guilt and responsibility for her own sin.

The seductive charms of Eve we will allow; yet neither guile nor violence, nor both, place man beyond the pale of responsibility; for, God does not tempt us beyond our strength; so in vain did Adam insinuate Eve's blame for his own action, saying to the Lord that the woman gave it him to eat. The attractive grace and love of woman were designed for government and not for his adoration or subjection. He was free to choose either God or the woman.

To-day we are paying the portion that our generation has to assume, out of the general debt of punishment contracted by the Root of Mankind and the common father of us all when he sinned.

Two thieves hung riveted by the side of the Master. The one was a trained miscreant, who

felt no responsibility for his sins. Hardened in vice, the soft, waxen disposition of youth became in him as unimpressionable as granite. As he lay there he inwardly abused God for having created him. He scorned responsibility. He gnashed his teeth at fate, and would not own any share in the culpability of his present situation. The justice of it never vexed his dreams. Yes, this is the accustomed way of criminals, to drown all guilt or to lay the blame anywhere but where it belongs — in their own perverse wills.

If the impenitent thief had realized his offences, fear of God would have seized upon his soul. Thus the penitent thief argues. For when his companion had just blasphemed God he reprimanded him: "Neither dost thou fear God?" Now, the penitent thief recognized his own responsibility; he did not blame God in the disguise of fate, nor curse his birth and the parents that bore him; nor his partners in guilt, harlots or thieves, nor his health nor liberty, nor any creature; but, with manly and quiet dignity, laid the blame upon his own soul. In truth, faith and contrition he avowed his guilt. In kindness he bore down on his companion to confess his sins, as a prelude to pardon: "And we indeed justly" (are under condemnation) "for we receive the due reward of our deeds." Grandly shouldering the weight of his own sins, he exonerates God from any participation in his wickedness: "But this man hath done no evil." Behold, then, the morning star of penance, the

gray dawn of forgiveness, the true philosophy of Lent. In the shadow of the Cross, with fasting, prayers and tears, we acknowledge our sins against God, and confess the many wrongs we have done to Him Who cheerfully gave His blood for us. The penitent thief confessed his sins—"We receive the due reward of our deeds." Jesus was his confessor. He asks for absolution: "Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom." The humble soul did not dream of his fitness for immediate pardon then and there, and speedy glory, but His Confessor gave him absolution. Jesus, the Model of confessors, the Father, the Shepherd, did not postpone forgiveness, with such humble confession and compunction, but there and then imparts absolution to His dying penitent, beneath the blue heavens, in the midst of His murderers, as the shadows of death were deepening on His own sweet face. "Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in paradise."

The character of this holy season is breathed forth in the tearful measures and sombre chords of the *Miserere*, that tells the story of a prophet's sins and sorrows—of royal vanity and warm lust, of confession and pardon. We, too, will turn our eyes inward. We will go into the quiet chamber of our soul alone with the Divine Physician, God, and lay bare before Him the miseries and infirmities of our life. We bid farewell to dangerous places, persons and habits—"Depart from Me ye workers of iniquity."

Each shall say, "I have acknowledged my sins, and my injustice I have not concealed."

This is the time appointed by God for new mercies. The present one is the hour; tomorrow is too late, for to-night we die. Now on earth where mercy reigns, for "who," says David, "shall confess to thee in hell?" Let us labor in our groanings, and wash our beds and water them with our tears. If we say with David: "I will confess against myself my injustice to the Lord," then too we may say to God: "Thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my sins."

The tears of Jesus and the water that welled from His lance-opened side will flow in upon our naked and sinful hearts—"Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop and I shall be cleansed; Thou shalt wash me and I shall be made whiter than snow."

We will banish ourselves as lepers to the desert of the Lenten solitude to find Jesus, and uncover our leprosy to Him. Jesus, Son of David, have mercy!—cleanse me. Rise from thy bed of sand and pillow of pebbles and lay Thy pale and emaciated hand upon my poor heart.

Within the gates, in the day and watches of the night, the voices of priests and monks, prostrate between the vestibule and altar, shall go up in clouds of incense and storm the tabernacle of mercy in the piteous words of Joel: "Spare, O Lord, spare Thy people."

The judgments of Edom in the vision of Abdias threatens our pride—"Though thou be exalted as

an eagle and thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down," saith the Lord.

The grim verdict of God against Ninive is pronounced, and the voice of the Church as of the Prophet Jonas is lifted for penance to escape the execution of God's vengeance on sinners. "Let men and beasts be covered with sackcloth and cry out to the Lord with all their strength and let them turn every one from his evil way." God saw their works and had mercy, when the Ninivites had done well their Lent.

God will not smite the lowly penitent in humility and compunction, confessing his sins and asking for forgiveness. Brethren, be penitent: Ye Ninivites of to-day do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

CHAPTER VIII.

GOD WILLS THE SALVATION OF THE WHOLE
WORLD.

OPENING the Holy Scriptures at the Eleventh and Twelfth Chapters of the Book of Wisdom, Mercy's scented lips seem to part, and to breathe in upon the soul the soft and intoxicating odors as of the first openings of the rose or the bewitching perfume distilled from Arabian plants. In vain does the cruel contention of the Calvinists, or the ruthless and false rigor of the Jansenists — whose grim faces of marble in look and temper avow the absence of the warm fires of charity within the 'whitened sepulchres' — aye, thrice in vain do both essay to rob us of or even diminish the bright, hopeful, and paternal spirit of mercy which pervades our sense of religion and sweetens the impressions of piety nursed in our breasts with anxious and zealous care by Holy Mother Church. Such men see a selfish God, a stern Judge, a God *only* just, and would dry up the wells of eternal charity and stifle the bright flame of hope that glows in our hearts.

The history of Jehovah's dealings with mankind, the life of Jesus and the teaching of the Apostles, stand ever in union for love and mercy, tenderest pity and sweet forgiveness — for a God,

and not a demon whose perverse character would incline Him to delight in the torture and dismay, rather than in the felicity of men.

The Will of God, that precedes the vision of human wrong, rebellions and sins, burns with the true and sincere wish for *all* mankind to attain to Heavenly glory, and to win eternal peace. That God could create any human being with feelings, and, above all, a soul fashioned to His own image and likeness, and doom him to inevitable and eternal confusion and suffering, merely that justice may contemplate her shadow in the red glare of eternal fire, is a preposterous incongruity and a base imputation put upon the hallowed nature of a God Who has exhausted His full power of love upon a base, undeserving and ungrateful world. God deserves better for His having so ardently loved the world as to offer His own Son, the One Victim that could redeem it.

And yet, how grand and divine is God's mercy all the more impressively and abundantly shown from the fact that He bears with such effrontery and is still patient toward those who libel His love. Yes, He still holds out the right hand of fellowship,—the absolving hand, to His slanderers. He stands ready to bestow the kiss of peace upon their sinful brows, and to give them all, without exception, mercy, grace and pardon: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee under my wings!"—O, sinful world, "thou wouldst not." Who will debate

the forbearance of God toward the impudence of those who impiously comment on and slander His attributes? Who dares deny that, were it His good pleasure, He could, with a single fiat—pronounced in less than time, aye, already pronounced when conceived—destroy the blasphemers, or even the whole world, as He visited His wrath in the floods of water in ages past upon the universe, and in cataracts of fire on peoples.

What if God in the bestowal and distribution of His graces puzzles us? Think you it becomes mortals to call into question the wisdom and justice of God the Lord? The simple word spoken to the envious toilers in the vineyard should silence forever human judgments and criticism for all time — “Friend, I do thee no wrong.” And in very truth, herein, we show our dearth of merit and our ugly pride. We, here, assume that we deserve the highest rewards and honors, and rarely feel we deserve less than any other whosoever. Let us know that this is the very pride that God loathes, and will deal hardly with. Were we indeed truly humble we should not compare nor complain, but be content. Mary was chosen for the highest honor God could bestow on a creature simply because God ‘regarded the humility of His handmaid.’ During the period when the Apostles were so utterly human — before Pentecost — they were preoccupied with the question, who was to be the highest in the Master’s kingdom; but Christ set up the

standard of His selection for honors, and occasioned some surprise when He decreed that the 'least' among them should be the greatest. The pride of man is his greatest enemy. We need a strong glass to discover a man who says: "Lord, I am not worthy." Now the virtue of humility must be tested and found strong in us for Christ's discipleship and true saintship. When this virtue is absent from our piety, there may be philosophy, but as a Christian religion, it is decidedly spurious.

The foundation of this virtue lies in the practical recognition of what God is and how infinite He is, on the one hand, and on the other, what trifles we are that God 'should be mindful of us.'

To question the 'ways' and 'judgments' of God — the former 'unsearchable,' the latter 'incomprehensible,' and confessed to be such by St. Paul, — stamps a man as proud, recreant and stubborn as our first parents. It is precisely in this very way — by mysteries — we are to confess a broad chasm yawns between the infinite wisdom of God and our limited understanding. When cast in the dark passages of revelation, we Catholics suffer our mind to follow in reverent docility the guidance of God in the mystical person of His Church, by Him established, and authorized to teach with the promise of His ever abiding with Her. This is a test, whether we would be gods and covet the very prerogatives of the Divinity; for, in God's immeasurable vastness of wisdom, of power, of love, and the rest,

His divinity lies. If we could comprehend all that God may, then we are not the tiny things we thought, but gods. From such madness may heaven defend us!

Here lies that sublime confidence of Catholics, their childlike trust, simplicity and humility — which is real only in the Catholic Church,—in the abiding consciousness of the infinite vastness of God and man's own narrowness. The liberty of thought or action that leaves out this primary principle is false in its assumption, chaotic and mad in its conclusion. It militates against the very idea of religion and Christianity. It is the pride of man that impels him to extend the domain of human liberty and rights beyond reason and faith; and 'having eyes,' men 'see not' that the one grand lesson of Jesus Christ was and is to bring us to subjugate our intellect as He followed His Father's will and judgment, and to learn of Him that He is 'meek and humble of heart.' Humility as a virtue operates only in the Catholic Church. With us it is a real thing — not a false, superficial vocalization or a pathetic apostrophe of Lord! Lord! or any action that a man might play; but on the contrary, a genuine and solid humility of the *intellect* by faith, and that a *real, definite, tangible* faith; and a real humility of the *heart* by obedience to laws above our very nature: "Not every man that says, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven." The Scribes and Pharisees told long prayers. To be pure is beautiful, to be patient and charitable is admirable — to be

humble in mind and heart is the very essence of religion. When we know Christ has revealed a truth, and the Church proposes it for our belief, even though it surpass our understanding, we believe more firmly than if we saw with our own eyes that it is true. Our eyes may deceive us, but Christ is the Truth, and the Church is the pillar and the ground of truth. True humility as a virtue is not found outside the Catholic Faith. Call us slaves, call us dupes, revile us for it, spit upon us for our faith, slay us—the Founder of our Faith bore all these reproaches. He foretold it; we accept it: “They shall drag you before princes, — but the disciple is not greater than the Master.” It is hard to be humble, but a religion that leaves pride unvanquished in us is false. The religion that loves and fosters humility (for only the true religion can have it) is the Catholic Church, the hated, reviled, jeered at, persecuted Church; but, like her Spouse Jesus, our friend and our salvation.

Amongst the savage peoples, grosser but less difficult obstacles have to be met and overcome by the Church, but in civilized countries pride is her greatest obstacle. It was always so in the world, and shall be so. Men do not care to bow down the mind in faith, and yet they delude themselves with the semblances and shadows of religion. Isaias will judge these men — “Woe to you that are wise in your own eyes, and prudent in your own conceits.” In the Catholic Church alone, obedience, which is the

highest act of Christian humility, is found, in truth.

Christianity, outside the Catholic Church, is a medley of sects. The plank of the Reformation is smashed into splinters, and the sects are floating on chips. The explanation is easy. Men want to follow their own opinions; they will not obey; they are proud and want nothing they do not care to believe, nothing they do not care to practise — ‘*My* will be done, not *Thy* will be done.’ The multiplicity of creeds gives evidence of a dismal notion of subjection and authority. It is easier to fast, to be chaste, or sometimes to suffer death, than to be humble and renounce one’s own judgments. Take it or leave it, this is at the root of true religion, and the life-blood of Christianity. Now we may proceed to our theme.

God is not a respecter of persons—His goodness and mercy are for all: “For Thou lovest all things, and hatest none of the things which Thou hast made, for Thou didst not appoint or make anything hating it,” says Wisdom. God precludes none from the fountain of clemency—“But Thou hast mercy upon all, because Thou canst do all things and overlook the sins of men for the sake of repentance.” Are none, then, in the world denied it, from the Eskimo to the Patagonian, from the Celt to the Islander of the East? Are none in the frozen mountains of the North, in the jungles of the tropical climes,—the Indian, the African, the Mongol—are none at all shut out from

it? Nay, the very variety, as in other things, makes up the beauty of mercy. "Thou sparest *all*, because they are Thine, O Lord, Who lovest souls," says Wisdom.

It is true that God chastises, but the unyielding hardness of men forces Him to it. God's justice aids His mercy by an ache of body, or a touch of mortal anguish, a small or a larger calamity, but Justice does not take the rein out of Mercy's hand until men will not be guided by her sweet government, and therefore—"Thou chastisest them that err by little and little, and admonishest them, and speakest to them concerning the things wherein they offend, that leaving their wickedness they may believe in Thee, O Lord. In judging, Thou givest place for *repentance*."

Though Jesus Christ is the Saviour, 'especially of the faithful' (Tim. iv., 10), He is the propitiation, 'not for our sins alone, but for those of the whole world.' God undoubtedly must love those for whom He shed His blood, and St. Paul assures us that 'Christ died for all.' (Cor. v., 15.) Yes, He died to save the souls of those men who are now in hell. Their evil doom is their own election: "Walk in the light of your fire and in the flames which you have kindled," spake the deep voice of Isaias to the damned.

The Council of Arles, that sat in the year 475, put its anathema against the person who would maintain that Christ has not offered Himself up for all men, nor wished all to be saved. "But why insist on the fact?" I hear you say. Why

did Paul and the troop of Fathers dilate upon it? Weigh the truth. St. Jerome has it: "John the Baptist did not speak the truth when he pointed at Christ with his finger, and suited the words to the action: 'Behold the Lamb of God, Who taketh away the sins of the world!' if any are yet in the world whose sins Christ has not taken away. Either they must be shown to be not of the world, or Christ's pardon has not reached them; or, if indeed they be of this world, one or the other thing takes place; namely, those freed from sin proclaim Christ's power; those not delivered show, as it were, the weakness of Christ's Passion. Far be it from us to believe that He is powerless in aught." Prosper, who is reputed as the most devout pupil of St. Augustine, and the leading exponent of this great Father, is heard on the point: "God exercises a care over all men. There is no one to whom the Gospel is unsuited, or the observance of the law is not adapted, or to whom the very nature of man does not belong. Consequently there is no sound reason for urging the intrinsic impropriety of Christ's dying for all men. On the contrary, there is every reason to believe that His Heart of mercy is open to every being with a human nature,—Preach the Gospel to every creature." Again, you ask, why dwell on a truth we know well enough? Verily, you know—not so, well enough. Your persuasion is not the deep realization of consequences; it is not a firm pedestal to sustain the weighty conclusion that emanates from the sublime truth; it

is not a worthy prelude that leads you right on to the noble duty Christianity lays upon you. And what is this? — the loving brotherhood of true charity, love of God, compassion for Christ, and sympathy for all men — a real, living interest in the world for which Christ died. In one word, we should pray for all men, because God yearns for the eternal health of all the children of men. Have you observed this obligation well? Do you realize that this duty means salvation for others? “I desire, therefore, brethren, first of all, that supplication, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for *all* men,” says St. Paul. We have a relationship with the *whole* world, the creatures of one Creator, the children of one father, Adam; for there is one God, says St. Paul. So should the world be of one mind, one faith, ‘for one is your Master, Christ,’ (Matt. xxiii., 10), and one heart in love. Alas! the family unity is broken, and we owe it to God, to our neighbor and to ourselves to gather up by St. Paul’s apostleship of prayers, the scattered fragments of religious unity, and make of the world one family in Christ to match the idea of one God, and fulfil the supreme wish of the Lord. This is in our power, or St. Paul, or our own Leo, had not asked us to pray for unity. By the accomplishment of this duty we can reach also the delinquent brethren within the pale of the Church. We know that the soft showers of the mercy of Christ will come upon their souls, which are as earth without water, and will refresh them.

We lounge in our easy chairs and gossip. The wickedness of our brother is a dainty morsel for our social repast. It sweetens our afternoon teas. If we would spend the time we now give to useless, if not sinful comment, in pleadings for mercy, how much more of general good would be accomplished, and how much less of scandal would mar our social life?

What love for souls, and what compassion for Jesus Christ is revealed in the words addressed to the Corinthians, and also to us. The Apostle appeals to our brotherly love, sympathy for the weak and the chivalry of our faith. "And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ died?" The sight of unbelief and impiety, so widespread, in view of God's desire for the world's salvation, cannot but make one feel that, had the virtuous acquitted themselves of the obligation of prayer the world would be better; and howsoever more or less, yet surely still better if you and I had done our part. Ah, you say, your prayers cannot do such wonders. Indeed, you are more humble than the humble; but you must know that it is God Who has given you the privilege, and you may truly say: "I can do all things—in Him that strengtheneth me." Still you are languid and do not pour out your soul for the world threatened with God's just judgment; but it is not your humility that restrains you from the kindly deed—which would be a false humility and the worst kind of pride; it is your apathy or your want of charity, for which you may expect that

as you have done unto others you shall be done by. It is criminal egotism to shut ourselves up in our own concerns, and by a sort of spiritual aristocracy bar out the commoners from our interest. The world ought to be one family in Christ, in faith, hope and love. While you kneel on your nicely upholstered *prie-dieu* and raise your jewelled hands to God in houses of earthly comfort and fashion, bethink you betimes of God's love and mercy. His life and blood are for all. So let sweet charity, angel of mercy, bear away your thoughts to the recesses of dark continents, and whereas till now you have remembered only your nearer kinsman, you shall henceforth with new zeal recall your absent kinsman in the unclothed Hottentot in his kraal.

God's mercy is not restricted to one person, but His mercy is held out to every sinner. Where does God's record tell of a single instance when He was deaf to the penitent and confessant? How often in the Old Law God has pardoned capricious Israel? We cannot comprehend how God endured their inconstancy and ingratitude, and made their onward march a veriest path of wonders and signs of merciful care. Who of you is worse than Manasses, patron of magic, idolater, an unclean and cruel man? Who of you is as wicked as Achab, also a king of Juda, a worshipper of Belial, persecutor of Elias, killer of prophets, and slayer of Naboth? Yet, Manasses and Achab did penance and were forgiven. David's double sin was incalculable in its effects upon a numerous kingdom,

but God was moved by the contrite and humble heart of the royal sinner, and forgave all. The Chanaanites — “Murderers of their own children, and eaters of men’s bowels,” a “cursed seed from the beginning,” and sorcerers: a nation that “the Lord did abhor,” says Solomon; and yet O Lord, “Thou gavest them place of repentance,” says Wisdom. How so your sins for number and enormity: Is yours the concentrated guilt of the Chanaanite and the Ninivite? God is anxious to pardon you, and on the day of your forgiveness a new song will be sung in heaven. “Lift up thy voice with strength, thou that bringest good tidings to Jerusalem,” says Isaias, “speak to the heart of Jerusalem, and call to her; for her evil is come to an end; her iniquity is forgiven; she hath received of the Hands of the Lord double for all her sins.” Do you doubt? What are your sins? Are you unchaste? Recall the adulteress brought fresh from her crime and reeking with her shame. The law of Israel said death unto her; Christ tenderly forgave her. Men said: “Wretch!” Christ’s merciful voice said: “My child.”

Zaccheus was a thorough man of the world, good liver, of fastidious palate, likely a connoisseur of wine. He had climbed a tree to catch a glance of the passing Wonder-Worker. The merciful eyes of Jesus went out from their natural course to find the sinner concealed in the foliage, and with adorable simplicity and paternal familiarity Christ invites Himself to the worldling’s home for dinner. So, now, if men will for-

sake their wicked pastimes, God, the Father of all, will take them home again to His Heart and Love.

Magdalen was a notorious woman. The virtuous men simply averted their eyes without affectation; hypocrites frowned upon her; chaste women merely blushed; cruel spinsters gathered in their skirts as the unfortunate wretch passed by. How earnestly does the world know that Christ came for such as Magdalen, that His eyes looked softest and loveliest, when they fell upon the sinner. Magdalen was, then, a shining mark which mercy courted: with the silent eloquence that utters no syllable, in the divine language of the heart, in tears she confessed and received the pardon of her God. Strange to unravel, but true withal, the natural qualities of sinners are oftenest of a higher order, than those of the good and virtuous; they are often more brilliant, more tender and more true, though they misapply their exalted gifts and fine traits. Christ comforted the penitent woman. Shall the Master's feet retain the odor of Magdalen's unguents for the penitent's glory? At all events the Cross and the Sepulchre shall tell of a devotion to Jesus that was never surpassed save by the Messiah's Virgin Mother.

He who, though all should fail the Master in His dark hour swore his fealty, denied the Master outright, and with the irreverence of an oath deepened the guilt of his apostasy. If Cæsar had a right to exclaim: "And thou, Brutus!" over

man's ingratitude to man, how aptly might Jesus have spoken the word,—And thou, Peter! But the look of the Master had an authority in it to speak, to move. The same sympathetic, ever adorable eyes were bent now upon the apostate. In the red gloom of the burning brazier the love-lights of the Master's eyes were reflected upon Peter's, and as burning arrows of love pierced his heart.

Those eyes of the Redeemer cannot rest, for being doomed by Eternal Love to be twin wanderers over the face of the earth whilst one soul is yet unconverted. How strangely perverse we are! In earthly loves wooers are too swift to believe the avowals of tender feeling. To distrust would be a heresy in gallantry, we are told, and yet we doubt the protestations of Eternal Love in the face of infallible tokens. Why will man be so much sooner impressed with God's justice, — that God is just and will surely punish, rather than that He is Love itself and forgiving? Alas! we are not lovers of Christ. The saints dwell upon Christ's love and believe in it always, for they are lovers of Jesus, whilst we only fear, and our fear is not yet grown to the perfection of loving Christ. Fear is much, the beginning of wisdom; it grows to wisdom, and the highest wisdom is the love of God; but as yet we linger with Israel on the verge of Sinai and have not come to Thabor. We have found Jehovah, but not Christ.

Judas, darkest of the guilty! The Lord saw his guilt gathering like a storm in the traitor's

bosom that was soon to break forth and bear him away in a sea of violence. He washed the plotter's feet. He called the thief friend, kissed the murderer, in the hope, as it were, that the Divine lips might move the sinner's heart. Christ gave Himself entirely to the unfaithful Apostle, His flesh and blood in Holy Communion, on the very eve of the fatal day—for Judas,—that records the worst deed of human villainy and the noblest act of Divine mercy.

Judas would yet have been saved for the mere asking of forgiveness. To have destroyed his Master was a great sin; to have doubted God's mercy and willingness to forgive any sin or number of sins, was a denial of the very character of Christ. It is this crime that keeps the traitor's memory shrouded in the gloom of the suicide's grave, before which we pause and grow sad.

Judas Iscariot, and you, my friend, who distrusted Christ's mercy, what a guilt is yours! You would rob the world of its only hope, the Crucifix. But no! Christ's prayer in behalf of His slayers was offered for us, too, and for all time. How sweet, how comforting, how merciful, how divinely the music of the words will charm our dying senses, "Father forgive them!"

CHAPTER IX.

DANGER OF PERSONAL PASSIVENESS IN RELIGION.

WITHIN the pale of the Church, the human soul, in all storms that sweep across her intellect, in the force of heavy seas of doubt and speculation, finds safe moorings in the firm, indissoluble chain of faith under the shelter of Peter's Rock. In the natural restlessness and caprice of our nature, like a ship in the cover of the haven, the soul will toss and lean; but, secure in the fixedness of Christian principles, she may mock the sea in her foaming wrath. In solemn and tragic grandeur the principle of human freedom stands out among the dogmas of our Faith—tremendous trust, an awful gift, a rock to shelter or to ruin. God's grace is freely vouchsafed us, and it is within the boundaries of our human prerogative to give it our assent, to guard it and esteem it as precious; or, to deny it our assent, reject and disown it for the pearl it is, and the ransom of Christ's blood.

Our paternal faith sweetly assures us of God's passionate will to have us attain to salvation; but that same faith reminds us that in spite of this, salvation cannot be accomplished unless with our own co-operation, and by our own merits, that accrue from human liberty. Unquestionably, the grace of God is the beginning and the primary

source of our salvation. Sweetly and lovingly is it violent at times in its action upon our will; but it remains ever true that the act which brings about our conversion, and corresponds with the grace of God in thought, word and deed, is a free act. God looks for this free co-operation, with assent to, and compliance with grace at the hands of human liberty: Our own election to glory is finally approved, and heaven earned.

We must act. Inaction means necessarily one or the other of two things — shocking indolence or cowardice, with a vile surrender. God or Belial! — “No man can serve two masters:” “He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth.” We cannot remain neutral. Passion romps and roars like the ‘roaring lion that goes about seeking whom he may devour.’ But we have God with us, the pledge of His Name — Emmanuel. Christ fought and won: “I have overcome the world.” It is our turn: we must do what He did. — “I am the way — if any man will come after Me.” Together we shall conquer. He will not conquer for us; we cannot win alone. Our forces must be linked. “God,” says St. Augustine, “created us without our co-operation. He will not save us without it.” “Have confidence,” says Jesus, but fight I must, though “my enemies live and are stronger than I.” (Ps. xxxvii.) To conquer means to have done battle — “I have fought the good fight,” says St. Paul. “The disciple is no greater than the Master — I have conquered the

world," says Our Lord. Shall you and I be of those 'who by faith have conquered kingdoms, stopped the mouths of lions?' Alas, brethren, fancy ye, in your tropical indolence, that you cannot be lost? You shun the battle, and are found in the hedges or clumps of trees, and emerge from your cover to clutch the aureole of the conqueror, when only 'he that shall overcome shall be clothed in white garments.' In the delirium of your horrible presumption, you fancy that you cannot be lost because you have the faith and are enrolled on the Book of Life. The name of the traitor Judas was entered on those pages, and instead of the red cross that sealed his predestination, the Blood of Christ has drawn a dark line across the suicide's name.

You cannot be lost! Be warned, that the condition of your future happiness be not sunk in oblivion. "He that shall overcome . . . I will not blot out his name out of the Book of Life. (Apoc. iii, 5.)

"The kingdom of God is within you." What does this widespread lethargy of Catholic piety reveal? What does this indifference to the sacraments of vast numbers signify? Aye, what does their bitter coldness confess? what does their irreligious indevotion avow? What does their tepid inaction say? It says the Lord has set them apart for glory; the verdict is pronounced, and they cannot be lost howsoever their inaction. Yes, but that verdict must be signed by two names, God's and your own, and

not sealed until your co-operation has been crowned with perseverance. The seal is the seal of your tomb. Religious indifference reads thus: We need not fight to win; we need not run to capture the prize. In theory these drones would disavow the Kismet of the Mohammedan or the Spinozan or Spencerian fatalism of some modern philosopher; but what is their practice but the denial of the necessity of their sharing in the work of salvation? — a negation of personal and free co-operation as an integral part of the grand work of shaping their immortal future. The freedom of the human will is ignored in religious indifference, when upon it, as upon a foundation, rests the value or merit of human action. The alarms of the watchman are not found in their disposition, though the Master has plainly said: "Watch and pray."

The religious fatalists live out the day and the night in the passiveness of dreams, — to whom real freedom is an unreality. They have nothing positive to do. Things present themselves to their minds and pass on to their wills for approbation or disapprobation, but they are dreaming — "Sleep on." Where, I ask, are the alarms in the lives of the Catholic multitudes standing between the two eternities — the ever-burning flames of hell, and the sweet entrancing beatitude to be found everlastingly in God, when a thought may determine? How do their lives show that it is in their own hands, to be crowned or lost? In the fixedness of destiny they repose in a placid

indifference and sphinx-like stolidity. They touch their lutes, and sleep in the forest, where wild beasts roam and pant for blood, but these foolish minstrels have not the wise huntsman's fears, 'lest,' as David says, 'at any time my enemies rejoice over me.' Cast into the tide and onward hurry of human events, they claim no hand in the direction of their destinies, but resign themselves passively to a fate.

In the storm on the lake, the Apostles were free to survive or perish. They could call upon Jesus or not. They chose life: "Save us, O Lord, or we perish." Man, having freedom, and a voluntary though necessary part in his life, here and hereafter, and viewing the economy that embraces the condition of his co-operation of free action, the wonder of Jesus Christ at his indifference must live forever in the words—"Why stand ye here all the day idle?" Once a year, by law, these words of the Lord are repeated throughout the Christian world to awaken our slumbering freedom, and stir up our Christian activities.

It depends, I say, upon our free co-operation with the merciful projects of our Creator, whether eternal happiness or the lasting and tormenting flame shall ensue upon our earthly days. The thousand thoughts that enter in procession our minds each day must be friends or foes. They are for good or evil, life or death. Where is the censorship of our vigilance? Do you not admit these thoughts and entertain them indis-

criminally? The Czar of Russia is beheld by a million hostile eyes, but this monarch realizes his situation, and takes due precaution. The palace walls are patrolled by trusted marksmen of skill and valor; the monarch's food is scrutinized and followed from the slaughter-house or the shambles to the monarch's plate. The Czar and the Sultan have their dishes eaten of and their wines sipped in their presence to defeat the assassin; but with countless unrelenting foes—enemies in the garments of friends, wolves in sheep's clothing—our immortal souls are surrounded, and we take no care, and practise little or no surveillance. The gates of our palaces are left open—our senses, eyes, ears and tongue are unguarded. The city of Rome lay in flames. So shall the soul of man, the city of God, lie in lasting ruins. "An enemy hath done this"—In vain will you say so. Christ's words will confound you,—"Watch and pray."

In the daily Complin, the prayer of God's Church reveals the economy of the present and the future, when the priests and monks and virgins pray together: "Save us, O Lord, in our watchfulness, guard us in our slumber, that we may watch with Christ, and may rest in peace." The sad voice comes from the Garden to us; I hear its trembling accents,— "Watch and pray;" and we sleep on. Like that king in the drama, we are not secure in our dreams.

It takes time for poison to do its work: "This night thy soul will be demanded of thee." Do

men realize what it means, 'to suffer the loss of one's soul,' or do they, I say, dream they cannot be lost? Are they mad enough to trifle with the eternal fires, harlequin the justice of God, and putting their hand in the lion's mouth, find his jaws close upon them? Has indeed the fierce truth of hell become to them but a legend? Shall not the crackling flames, nor the soft pleadings of Christ in the sacrament of penance, and in the tabernacle, bidding all men to 'come unto Him,' have power enough to dispel the stupor of men? Aye, and that is a deadly stupor — indifference, wherein serious facts and stern truths dissolve in vagaries, or evaporate into the unreality of phantasies. 'Tis twilight and the gloaming; eternal night is not far off. The cool shadows go before the grim, cold face of eternal death. Indifference, coldness to God, inactivity — awaken from it, or ye are lost!

Moral freedom means election. To elect we must know, examine and judge. This is action — "Why stand we here all the day idle?" The moments pass quickly. Time waits for no man. What shall you harvest? Precisely what you have sown: "Night cometh on when no man can work." The food that lies before us we look upon without misgiving; we welcome it to the palate, and yet it might prove a traitor to our soul, and deliver us up to the demon of wicked desires. Yet, we watch not, nor suspect with a serpent's prudence. Bestir thyself, Israel; come out quickly from thy drunken stupor, or, like

Holofernes, the sword of death shall cleave thy soul in the tents of thy drowsiness.

'Tis solemnly true that from the heights of 'His high sanctuary,' God sees the future and foreknows our free actions. The drunkard's act to-day is foreseen by God, yet God would not have foreseen this act of drunkenness had not the drunkard chosen the act. Had he chosen instead an act of temperance this act would have been foreseen. The drunkard's will was free. Freely he elected. God was a spectator. But why invade the eternal sanctuary? Why open the Master's side with the rude lance of curious enquiry? Why unveil the Holy of Holies, and boldly enter the inner chamber of God, where His secrets lie in eternal slumber, and where only the Eternal Priest, Jesus Christ, may enter, being God? God loves us and gives us ample grace; we are free—this is enough. Why abandon, then, the beaten paths of our fathers, and renounce the simple truth, and plain, unabstruse principles of the ancients, to be lost in the broad wastes of speculation? The Church has not spoken; why wander to distant lands, without Bethlehem's star to guide our way, for we shall only be bewildered by the incomprehensibility of the things that are God's. We have, I say, God's grace, and may co-operate with it. Beyond these plain facts we tear the veil from God's glory, and ought to recall the fate of him who touched the ark. We wander into what St. Augustine calls the 'hidden,' the 'lofty' things, the secrets that are inacces-

sible to human knowledge. In simple and picturesque beauty St. Augustine lays out our path. It contains the veritable and infallible element of true piety—humble obedience: “My sheep hear My voice, but do not question nor discuss it, nor debate upon it.” We are not gods nor even prophets. “Think of the Lord in goodness and seek Him in simplicity of heart. He is found by them that tempt Him not. For perverse thoughts separate from God.” Our whole duty lies in fulfilling the condition which the law of salvation has attached to our election, that it may be honorably a free one. It summons us to act with God—“My *yoke* is sweet”—in the performance of good works, in doing the Christian battle valiantly.

“God condemns no one before he sins, and He will not crown anyone before he shall have overcome,” says St. Augustine. “The justice of God will not abide with thee unless thou wilt it. The plan of the world’s deliverance is salvation by man’s co-operation.” “Grant that I am one of the predestinated,” says St. Chrysostom, “faith teaches that I never can be saved unless I co-operate with God—unless I work with God.”

Has liberty no meaning? Man has a part in the great work of salvation. Christ has gone before and left His footprints. Do we choose to follow Him? “If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me.” Follow Him; He bids you, as He bade Matthew. “Follow Me;” and you, brethren—“Why stand ye

here all the day idle?" The world does not co-operate or work with God — "My *yoke*." God-fearing women, youths of good families, pupils of Christian schools, many young women, a goodly proportion of the married, simple folk, — these trudge after Christ, walk in His footsteps, bleed with Him, sigh with Him, die with Him daily.

The multitude of men, young and old, choose the broad way and industriously avoid the narrow Way of the Cross. To serve two masters is their plan; to choose the world, the flesh and the devil for life, and elude the devil in death — "Come, let us enjoy the good things that are present; let us fill ourselves with costly wines and ointments; let us crown ourselves with roses before they are withered; let no meadow escape our riot." (Wisdom ii.) The price of salvation is too costly. They do not choose to pay it. Co-operation, the condition of eternal happiness, is too burdensome for flesh and blood. To placate their consciences, men affect to deny the reality of eternal terrors. Deluded Christians, your denial of them does not abolish the punishments of hell. Your wish stands father to your thoughts. "Fie! we are born for nothing and our spirit shall be poured abroad as soft air." "These things they thought and were deceived, for their own malice blinded them, and they knew not the secrets of God, nor hoped for the wages of justice, nor esteemed the honor of holy souls." (Wisdom.)

Why languish in the fallacious dream of eternal foresight? Brethren, we are free, and by our moral freedom shape, as it were, that foresight. We are free to-day to do. God has seen, and sees, only what we freely do. To fancy that they cannot fail in one moment to snatch their immortal souls from the jaws of hell, and to accomplish what the saints have striven through many sleepless nights and rough days of anguish, penance and blood to achieve, is the hallucination of hosts of Catholics, and no delusion is more perilous. To have stood idle all the day and hope for the reward due to the heat and labor, and not to indolence and idleness, is assuming that God will vouchsafe the grace of the last sacraments, and with an irreverent trust, imagining God cannot deny it. But the Fathers of the Church are not without great fears for such conversions.

Shall God afford you this desperate opportunity? He can, He may, but must He? "The Christian has no tomorrow," says Tertullian. "God has made a promise of forgiveness to your penance; He has not promised a tomorrow to your delay," says St. Augustine. So from the beginning, the danger of dwelling all day with the devil, and hoping too confidently in the last moment to take up everlasting lodging with God has made our Fathers anxious. St. Augustine goes on: "O man, who putteth off thy repentance, perhaps this is thy last day." "It happens by the just judgment of heaven that when a man can be converted and refuses, when, perhaps, he wishes it, he

cannot be converted," says Innocent II. St. Augustine's voice should wend its way through the tumult and din of the world, and find the ears of everyone of the faithful of God's Church. This great saint says: "If a sinner is converted in the last of his days, we must not despair of his forgiveness; but since hardly ever or rarely such a conversion is real, I hold we must have fears for the penitent. If the priest fails to arrive on the scene in season to bestow his divine offices of mercy and love, what then? There is hope in an act of perfect contrition, the end of which is love. May we not have anxiety lest fear more than love operate as the essence of sorrow in aged delinquents? Lest a soul, for life oblivious of God, might not wholly love Him in a twinkling?"

In such an event the sacrament must have been bestowed, and even then fears are not wholly unquestionable. Tertullian says: "It is not the repentance of their sins that moves the dying, it is the warning that death is near." "If you wish to do penance when you cannot sin, the sins have abandoned you; you have not abandoned the sins," says St. Augustine. In all fairness, is it a nice gift to lay upon God's altar—a faded flower, a wasted life? Even Seneca asks if we be not ashamed to keep all the best for our evil life, and set apart for goodness the time which is useless for anything else. Still, if it be so, God is merciful, and the faded flower and the wasted life He will accept *to-day—to-day*. Tomorrow say you? The Christian has no tomorrow.

Well, then, we do believe that God has decreed glory unto His elected ones, and puts upon their temples a diadem woven out of the united merits of His own and theirs, His grace and their good works! St. Francis of Sales wrote in this spirit to Lessius the theologian, in 1613, asserting that he had always considered and held this doctrine as more in harmony with the mercy and grace of God and an affectionate belief. He says: "There are souls now in hell; all hope is cancelled from their bosoms. Who shall say that God arbitrarily, and in entire disregard of their own choice of moral freedom, doomed them to their sad end? It remains for us to believe that God did not destine to elect to glory absolutely, but in view of the condition to be fulfilled of man's co-operation, resolved into the good works wrought at the instigation of heavenly grace."

The universal judgment drawn in St. Matthew cannot be looked upon as a mock trial and an empty fiction. Judgment is for guilt or innocence. Here we must presume a real judgment given for weal over men's good actions, or for woe over their evil deeds freely done.

The verdict pronounced upon the chosen shall contain the element of their freedom to have done or not: "I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat." The verdict pronounced upon the damned shall illustrate their freedom to have otherwise chosen, and base their evil doom upon their own demerits and lack of compliance with God's grace: "I was hungry, and you gave Me not to

eat." "Enter," says St. Chrysostom, commenting on Christ's words to the elect, "into the possession of the kingdom which is your own inheritance, as it were, your Father's and your own, which has been owing you from the beginning, because I knew you were to be as you are, and I prepared this kingdom for you." The parables of the *workman*, of the *nuptial garment*, and of the *talents*, emphasize the imperative-ness of our co-operation, as the condition of our election to glory. We must work, we must cultivate the Christian virtues in our hearts, and utilize the gifts of body and of soul God has endowed us with. "What seek ye here?" asks God, standing at the gates of Paradise. "Heaven, eternal life," you answer. Then Christ will say, "What have ye done in life to deserve what you ask of Me? Each one shall receive his own reward according to his labors." Now you, my brethren, stand idle in the market-place, basking in the sun; you gaze into space, wrapt in the soothing illusions of self-love and spiritual indolence. Calm within the bowers of every earthly pleasure, you nurse the dream of serving two masters, the spirit and the flesh, God and man. Idlers, the business of heaven awaits your attention—abandon all else. Fathers and mothers may cry after you, "Whither?" Without abating your speed, let the winds bear back the answer Christ has drawn up for you: "Know you not that I must be about the things that are my Father's?"

The wife of Zebedee craved of the Master in behalf of her two sons, the tremendous dignity of their sitting, one at His right hand, and the other at His left hand in His kingdom. Jesus replied: "It is not Mine to give." St. Cyril paraphrases the reply — "It is not Mine to give," — thus: "Rewards should have a correspondence with the endeavor of those who contend for them. It is not in my power to seize the highest reward and bestow it on whomso I will. He should draw it off who beats out all the others and merits the honor." This idea of our personal merit, and harmony of labors and rewards is sustained by St. Augustine. The saint asks: "What does it mean — 'it is not Mine to give?' I cannot give it to the proud — they were proud as yet. If you earnestly wish for the honor, do not be as you are. It is prepared for others: be these others and the honor is prepared for you." "God," says St. Ambrose, "has predestinated the rewards of those whose merits He foresees." St. Basil comments on Christ's answer to the wife of Zebedee in the following paraphrase: "If anyone aspires to My kingdom, and endeavors to sit at My right hand, then I look about Me carefully to see what I can do for him. I demand to see the drops of sweat that are witnesses to his labors in works of piety; for, the reward of the sweat and the labor is to sit in My assembly — for He designates the merits of the recipient and the power of the donor as one and the same."

"The lost souls have abandoned, of their own free will, the path of goodness. It does not follow because they are foreknown to fall, they are predestinated; they would though be predestinated if they were to return and persevere in holiness," is the remark of Prosper.

The prayer of God's Church appended to the Litany of the Saints touches the question: "Oh Almighty and Eternal God, Who . . . art merciful to all those whom Thou foreknowest shall be Thine by faith and good works."

Time presses. The kingdom of God is at hand. Salvation and predestination — future happiness is within the radius of our power to achieve.

The condition is simple and clear. Follow the leading of God's beneficent grace through straight or winding ways. Walk ever in Christ's hallowed footsteps over moorland and lea, receiving with sweet submissiveness the pains and anguish cast upon Israel's path, to prove her worthiness by humble and patient endurance of the test to enter the Promised Land.

Not every idler, dreamer, or sayer, shall accomplish the destiny — not every man who says, Lord! Lord! The land that flows with milk and honey is reserved for the worker who trudges over the hard road that lies between his exile and his home — nay, not every man who 'says,' but he that 'doeth' the will of My Heavenly Father.

The kingdom of heaven depends upon your good works; yet ye stand idle all the day, and

silently but surely evening draweth on and the solemn darkness of the night begins to unfold itself, to drape the judgment seat of Christ, before Whose solemn face the living and the dead shall stand to learn their destiny or doom.

Time was given you by God to weave you a crown out of the golden threads of the passing hours. Each moment lost shall tell forever in the diminished beauty of that crown. "If thou shalt not watch, I will come to thee as a thief. Behold I come quickly; hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." We of the faith are special heirs from our birth to a kingdom. While life endures the crown is yet only in our hands and we may lose it. When we shall have come into our kingdom Christ shall place it on our brows. Now, in life 'tis but fair we show our fitness for it. With each good work we do so, and tighten our grasp upon the crown, 'that no man take it.' Not in idle dreams, nor in vain confessions of the lips, nor in the gilded resolves of pious enthusiasm—this is only the reed; but, in the rich fruits of action, and the real works of virtue, shall we demonstrate this fitness.

These shall be our witnesses, these shall speak for us when our tongues are silent in the tomb. Our toil, our labors, our solicitude will water the parched land of human nature with the sweat of our brows; and with the violence that the kingdom of heaven must suffer, we'll wrest from the grudging soil the harvest of honest and industrious piety that is the price of our salvation.

God's mercies are beyond our understanding. No sinner should ever lose hope, and yet, neither should men take such an awful risk and gamble with justice in their plan of living; such men play a desperate game; for, at least, they are as liable to lose as win, where the virtuous and constant are always morally certain of winning the crown, and have only a gentle fear of losing the prize.

Sovereign in art, the Church drapes her pillars and altars for the obsequies of her dead. It is not art in those of other faiths to do so—who have no fears. The Church's mourning colors and the sombre, and, while not melancholy, still sad numbers of her *Dies Irae* and *De Profundis* tell the living in accents of pain and grief, that 'no man knoweth whether he be worthy of hatred or love.' Fears remain. When the Spirit has informed her of a saint's glory, she casts aside her mourning and puts on the white of the wedding garments. Let us then fear God's judgment, and fear more our own inconstant and perverse hearts, believing with the prophet, that 'fear is the beginning of that wisdom' we are all created to possess, and which reaches its highest perfection in the contemplation and fruition of God forever.

CHAPTER X.

MANY ARE CALLED BUT FEW ARE CHOSEN.

“MANY are called but few are chosen”—how joyous, and sad! how exhilarating and downcasting! God is the author of the former adjective in either set, man is the maker of the latter; God’s the hope, man’s own the despair. You and I had our share in the meaning of the adjective ‘few;’ we have given it a lighter or a deeper shade of meaning by our life. If few are chosen, indeed, it is because the many have not chosen to be so. God calls, man chooses. God’s will alone completed our vocation; this measure is eternal as Himself. The union of God’s and man’s will is necessary to complete the final choice. God’s desires ever have been, and are now, in behalf of the ‘many;’ few reciprocate His love in calling them. The prehistorian has recorded it: “He came to His own, and His own received Him not.” St. Peter, in his second Epistle, Chap. i, verse 10, distinguishes the two things—vocation and election: “Wherefore, brethren, *labor* the more, that by *good works* you may make sure your *vocation* and *election*.”

I take it the idea of eternity claims in your minds the full strength of its purport—what it means to be forever lost to God,—to be cast out into exterior darkness, constrained to gnash your

teeth in increasing wrath and repining, and to burn, without hope of respite, behind the ponderous gates of hell, bolted and sealed by the hand of God. Forever my Lord? Aye, the clock of hell, if there be one, is wound up by the hand of God, and is destined to run as long as justice lasts, and — “His justice endureth forever and ever.” In his lonely vigil, the sick man in his restless fever of the night turns his burning eyes to know the hour, and the measured strokes of the time-piece tell off the seconds that, though they seem as minutes, yet surely bring the dawn: Oh, for the glad day and the rubicund face of the morning sun, to supplant with his blushes the deathly pallor of the moon! Oh, for the faces of friends and words of sympathy! In hell it is eternal fever and eternal night; it has no morning — my God! But there is no clock, no pendulum to swing and break the madding sameness, for there is no time — it is eternity. With this picture for a background let recollection throw upon the scene those terrible words: “No man knoweth whether he be worthy of hatred or love.” Nay, you shall not on earth be ever absolutely certain of your eternity, — whether it shall be the vision of God’s love, or the terrors of His justice, chanted in numbers of fire, with a minstrel for each flame, and each minstrel a lost creature. We tread with St. Anselm upon a narrow plank from shore to shore; from time to eternity, over the dangerous chasm. Beneath our feet is the seething wrath of hell, and we walk blindfolded,

through the illusions of life and self-love, through the dense mists of human passions that overlie us, so that without a guiding hand from above we must lose our footing, stumble, fall, — and perish! “Unless the Lord keep the city, they labor in vain that keep it.” Above the clouds the ecstatic carols of saints absorbed in lasting thanks; below us the frantic death-song of the doomed, and the despondent dirge of demons — the terrors of the infernal abode; around us the world in all its glitter, the flesh and its allurements, the devil with his snares, earth’s ambitions, fortunes and pleasures — all allies to Satan, sent abroad to secure victims, and armed with a terrible power to try our liberty, and sound our allegiance: whether we be for God or the devil; Christ or Lucifer! Is the dreadful eternity for me? you ask. The voice of the Church has sealed this uncertainty when she informs us that ‘no one is sure of his future salvation unless it be specially revealed to him from above.’

Shall we debate the decrees of heaven? Shall we imitate Antiochus in a demon’s pride that would make him a god? and shall we have to fall from the chariot of our conceit and be humbled, or drawn on to surer perdition by the clouds of our own unchecked dreams of self-esteem? Shall God use violence to force from us the confession of His divineness and our own humanness, as He wrung it from Antiochus, only when sharpest pains pierced his bowels, and an army of worms invaded his noisome flesh, when

he was forced to exclaim: "It is just to be subject to God, and that a mortal man should not equal himself to God" (Mach. xi, 9, 12); or, shall we in the obedience of Heli bow with reverent head before the immensities and secrets of God and humbly say: "It is the Lord, let Him do what is good in His sight." (1 Kings, iii, 18.)

The sovereign reason, then, why our destiny is shrouded in obscurity, is that God so wills it: it is God's statute, and we may well exclaim with David: "All Thy statutes are truth" (Psalm cxviii), and what God decrees must be wise. We feel the sharp pain of the uncertainty. St. Paul felt this pain, accepted it and bore it at the very moment he confessed the mystery: "Who hath known the mind of God?" The uncertainty of salvation compels a sense of dread. Where other arrows have failed to accomplish the work, the thought of this uncertainty wages a war of extermination and utter effacement against our self-satisfactoriness — "In Thy truth Thou hast humbled me," says David. Pride, our darling idol, crumbles at the touch of this mystery, even as the false gods of Athens trembled and fell from their pedestals at the pressure of the Apostle's tread. And, withal, is it not the fairest blossom of our faith? Wheresoever we be, amid the world's gay scenes or amongst the dismal cells and gloomy corridors of monastery or convent; in the lonely huts of the hermits far out in the deserts, this uncertainty goes with us and its presence pours forth the fragrance of

humility upon our way; it breathes forth the odors of Jesus and true piety. It is a stern monitor set upon our pride. Men mount the heights of spiritual greatness — those dizzy heights! — and all but press their thin, mortified fingers upon the very gates of heaven, and still the voice of Paul, like a warning from the tomb, cries out: Beware! beware! only 'he that shall have persevered to the end, the same shall be saved.' Till then, yes, till then 'no man knows' — fear yet and tremble; fear now; fear always: fear wisely, fear moderately — only fear.

Humility is the first-born of this great *uncertainty* to the soul, and the fairest fruit of her womb. The Psalm cxviii of the prophet contains all the lessons of this dismal secrecy that veils from our mortal eyes the eternal years. David groaned, as we, for his destiny was in the balance like ours; he knew not the weights and measures of heaven, and yet he, — king, prophet and saint, — in uncomplaining submission, bent forward his head to God's decree. The pangs of his royal soul we discern in his divine songs, but only as the expression of a grief and pain willingly and lovingly borne. These were not as the signs of his complaining displeasure, nor the token of any rebellion: "I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are equity, and in Thy truth Thou hast humbled me" (Psalm cxviii, 75). As the foundation influences and gives character to the whole structure, so must the first lesson of this mystery, humility, permeate every virtue of our

life and constitute the very alphabet of Christian piety. We wonder at the altitudes of wisdom involved in this grim truth, but it behooves us to check our impertinent curiosity: "Lord, my heart is not exalted, nor my eyes lofty; neither have I walked in great matters nor in wonderful things above me" (Psalm cxxx). "Thy knowledge is high and I cannot reach it" (Psalm cxxxviii). "Thy word is exceedingly refined" (Psalm cxxxviii). You are in earnest, who long to be saved. You do not conceal your anxiety over the dreadful uncertainty of your future election. You say with David: "My zeal hath made me pine away." Then is it time to avow your small wisdom and trivial wit; to bow down and confess to the Lord your littleness, with the prophet: "I am very young and despised." Go on and confess thus again to God: "Thy justice is justice forever;" and yet the uncertainty will abide with us, lingering after long struggles, invading the hoariest and most virtuous old age. Shadows everywhere! — the most sacred objects cast them: Even the altar has its shadows, subject to this world. "Trouble and anguish have found me"—here in my old age, here in my cloister, here in the temple of God, yet, I adore Thee in all Thy decrees: "Thy testimonies are justice forever." 'Tis the great affair of life, the one concern, the one thing necessary — salvation; yet it is buried in the gloomiest, darkest depths of the eternal counsels. "It is the business that walketh about in the dark," as the prophet pro-

claimed it. "He will overshadow thee with His shoulders." "Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the night." Yes, the uncertainty of salvation is the terror of the night. In what human attitude think you the great St. Paul shows the most admirable and impressive? Was it as the penitent in the desert? Was it as the Christian scholar at Ephesus? Was it as the captive in the Marmatime prison? Was it as the thrilling preacher before the Areopagus, the Christian sage among the great schools of Athens? Was it as the saint drawn up to the third heaven? Was it at Trefontane where his head fell under the blade? Who knows what strange things men will do or what they will not endure in the secret hope of becoming some kind of divinity. If Paul was greater, he was never more truly great than in that scene where he stands as a man in the midst of God's mysterious judgments, whose lofty towers rear themselves above his human understanding, lost to his vision in the very clouds of heaven, and, falling down, humbly adores God's hidden immensity and secrets: "O heights of the riches, of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how incomprehensible are Thy judgments, and unsearchable Thy ways!" He is supremely contented that 'the Lord knoweth who are His' (2 Tim.). Why will man weary his mind and harm his soul by supposing he were to know his lot? It is less than fruitless and hopeless speculation. The supreme fact stands out before us always: We cannot vault it, we cannot get under

it, we cannot go round it. God wills our lot to remain a mystery to us.

Gratitude as a virtue has never prevailed with mankind or made any enviable record, and it may be questioned if pure gratitude to God for their prospective eternal happiness would act upon the elect as a check upon their evil tendencies, and a quietus upon sin, as effectually as the fear which now hangs over every man and haunts and tracks him everywhere—the fear lest he perish. The uncertainty of salvation is lawfully ordained to give birth to fear. Was it not to obtain the grace for us so to do that Christ feared in the Garden the awful judgments of His Father, which He was about to assume in all their rigors? Fear is an essential part of the Christian life. Paul, Augustine, Dominic, Francis and Ignatius, feared to the end. The fear upon the Master at Olivet chides our presumption, and as a branch of the old tree of death, man's pride must be lopped off. False confidence builds upon one's own worthiness, and never reckons upon the possibility of one's unworthiness.—“Work out your salvation with fear and trembling,” was St. Paul's advice to the Philippians. It is his advice to us. He yet further warns the Corinthians against the perils of presumption and over-assurance: “Wherefore, let him that thinketh himself to stand, take heed lest he fall.” (1 Corinthians, 10, 12.) The cold passivity of those outside the pale of our holy faith chills us to the marrow with its irreverent boldness: but it sounds more poetical than true

to preach and believe that we must rest in the immense love of God without the smallest fragment of fear to vex our spiritual repose, or to mar the rhythm of our life. Verily, such slumber as this forgets the 'watch and pray' of the Master. Such faiths as these are of men, not of God. This is the poetry of earthy loves and human sentimentalism—religion as men would have it. Fear, true and real, faith demands. 'Tis our duty to confess that God is good, sweet, and but too forgiving toward us wretches, but God has other attributes that exact our homage and compel our respect: "See therefore the goodness and severity of God," is St. Paul's counsel. It may explain the absence of grosser indulgences from some lives of presumptuous sectaries who languish in God's soft, tender and poetical love, like Oriental monarchs in their scented bowers, heedless of the lurking serpent, to observe that we see the drunkard's follies; we observe the ungoverned youth consorting with harlots; we hear the explosions of anger and ill-temper; but, only God sees the pride within men's bosoms. His sharpest sword is for such, and He is a long time whetting it, that it may the better do its work, when the hour comes for retribution. We may not have any of these other vices, but have we no presumption?

St. Paul fascinated Athens with his eloquence. God favored him in most singular ways; and, notwithstanding all, the Apostle was harassed with fears for his eternal future. With the meekness of the lowest, with the sweetness of the

very child, he begged the prayers of the faithful in his own behalf, lest, as he owed to them, 'whilst he preached to others he himself might become a castaway' — "He will do the will of them that fear Him" — and "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him." Trace to its source the current of fear and you will find it in the spring of an humble heart, one that knows and realizes the vastness and the justice of God, and droops under its own sense and weight of unworthiness to ever stand in the presence of the Most High God. — "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?" The basis — hidden in the ground — of the false confidence of heretics is not love for God, but an extravagant love of themselves. "I have learned how to fear, after the example of St. Paul, who in fear cried out: 'O heights of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God,'" says St. Augustine. St. Prosper writes as follows: "The affair of our fore-election is hidden away from us so that a healthy fear may aid us in being always humble, and watching out lest we tumble down." Thus we always feel the presence of an humble self-disesteem that exhales from their lives and ever marks the saints, whilst a shocking self-sufficiency brands the heretical beliefs as the myths of self-loving men. On the eve of the Redemption the corruption of men was at flood tide. Lamenting over the world, the prophet says: "There is no fear of God before their eyes." How is it that men who have not the true faith can ever look unmoved out upon the

terrible and uncertain futurity? Methinks they are certain they must be saved. They have not the fears of St. Paul or of St. Augustine, and the vast army of God's dear saints. Perhaps they allege and fancy they have not sinned. Only God knows our sins; but St. John says we have all sinned in many ways. The world must have changed since Christ called out unto the men who fancied themselves as being without sin, to stand forth and apart—"Let him that is without sin cast the first stone."

When the book of our life is opened, and one by one the pages are turned back and the record of each instant and each thought is submitted to the searching light and piercing scrutiny of God's luminous face and sovereign knowledge, who can say, who dares to say, what it at least may reveal, of his voluntary wrong, now unknown to himself or forgotten? Nay, the very absence of fear and the very over-confidence in your own integrity; this unsuspecting worthiness, condemns you before the judges of Israel, the Apostles and saints of God. If you were to be your own judges, and the judgments fashioned to human standards, and left to biassed tribunals, the issue might be more or less safely forestalled. But, God shall be our judge. Heretics, however, will not fear, though the motto, "No one is a judge in his own case," is accepted by them in human things. What is the philosophy of this motto? It is simply that men are biassed, perverse and one-sided in that which concerns themselves,

when their own interests are at stake. May this not be so in their religious life, that is left to their own judgments? The worst corruption of men's lives, and especially their pride and conceit, are to-day spread over with a white covering of snow; but the snow will melt as they draw nigh the eternal Sun of Justice. Are you sure the spring will not uncover some hidden corruption in you after the summer of your lives shall have passed? O, heretics! Why did the saints of God dread the uncertainty of salvation? Surely they did not lack love of God, nor love Him less for fearing Him. Verily, if true love were to be without fear they would have banished fear forthwith. No, they realized God's justice. They knew salvation lay in their own frail hands. They distrusted their wicked nature. They were always subject to temptation, and free to stand or fall; they felt the dangers of life, and the inclination to pride inherent that sustains the uncertainty of the saints in the matter—the grave matter of salvation: in one word, they feared themselves—their own shortcomings and perverseness more than God's judgment. Their fear sprung from the root of an humble heart, for the judgments of God would square exactly with their own lives. The treasure of a man's salvation is kept in a treasure-house of clay, say, with St. Paul, rather in 'weak vessels' of glass, easily broken. St. Paul has bequeathed a warning to false religions that admit no fear, beyond a mere formality: "Not he that com-

mendeth himself is approved, but he whom God approveth." What again is the error of these self-satisfied sectaries who walk up to judgment with *sang-froid*, a bold, unerring step, as the Pharisee, in the full empty bloom of a consciousness of, and confidence in, an undefiled life. Their error is that they repute themselves as unlike 'the rest of men, sinners.' If this deadness of conceit lies on us, falsely termed Christian repose, if we are apathetic and incredulous toward the terrors of salvation, and cold in our hearts whilst we study the scene which Christ draws up of that dreadful day of anger in St. Matthew, our humble duty is to cry out to God, with holy passion and tears: "Pierce Thou my flesh with Thy fear, for I am afraid of Thy judgment." Humbled, then, by the sense of heaven's just terrors, and our soul oppressed with awe and plunged in a sea of tribulation, we might well not stop, but sink forever in despair; but, we know Our Saviour has leaped from on high into the foaming waves of our own grief—"And the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us." And leaped—considering the number of Masses offered up since the day the High Priest himself first offered—into a sea of His Own blood, to save us. "If it had not been that the Lord was with us, let Israel now say—perhaps the waters had swallowed us up." (Psalm cxxiii.) We do not so despair then, for our sublime faith imposes on us the practice of hope and the mystery of our future life is designed in God's plan to serve us

up with the means of building for ourselves a hope that will be unto our souls a veritable tower of strength, a house of gold, and a gate of heaven. Our keenest anguish, our sharpest griefs must not pass beyond the boundaries of hope. Whilst we dwell on our own weakness, our miseries and sins, we must betimes turn our eyes upon the face of the dead Christ. We quiver with the awful trust of human liberty in the inconstancy of our souls, and still we must have confidence in God—this is our duty—Who in His mercy tends to save us; Whose grace is never wanting to us in any of our needs. God asks of us the test of this confidence — He longs to have it. He finds pleasure and glory in its manifestation. He never tires of hearing us say, Lord, I trust Thee! When Peter stepped out upon the waters from his bark he must have been submerged by the billows; but, how sublime was the confidence in Him the Apostle here shows to Jesus. This same childlike trust must adorn our virtues—a trust by which we throw ourselves out into the deep of this world, with its strong currents of passion,—where human nature is unable to survive long, and the soul must perish, and trust lovingly and ever in Our Lord to save us. We must neither presume nor despair. Our humility may have full liberty within the bounds of hope. Co-operation implies fully that God is with us—“If, therefore, I must co-operate with God I must have trust in God and distrust of myself, and always fear lest I might, through my

own weakness perish, whilst God's mercy is for saving me," is the utterance of St. Chrysostom. "Intemperate fears," he says, "and immoderate anxieties should be set aside as reprehensible. Such disposition denotes a lack of trust in God. This does harm, whereas, the legitimate fear, born of the uncertainty of salvation, is intended by God for our good." He loved us first, and we should trust God above ourselves. "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." His love for us is invariably true, whilst man himself is, and always has been, a traitor to his own soul. God is uniformly love and fidelity to him. Our saints have all heartily discountenanced distrustful solitudes: "This fear," says St. Chrysostom, "should by no means find subsistence in useless terrors and anxieties; it should be the beginning of wisdom that consists in this; namely, that we may be able to enjoy the moral assurance of our salvation." Here again I pause to observe that humility is the underpinning of Christian hope and confidence—the ancient fact, ever new, that man is weak, fickle, and, above all, measured in his abilities. The prophet's trust in God never wavered: his hopes never rose out of himself. At all times and in all events, "Thou art my strength," was David's prayer always. When he tended his flocks, when he rushed forth half naked as a youth to slay the giant, on the throne, on the field of battle, "Thou wilt bring me out of the snare, for Thou art my protector," was the prayer that guaranteed a prosperous issue to each and every

event in his life—in his kingdom, but more than this, in his own heart. We are weak and always subject to temptation. David's hope is ours, but the corner-stone of that trust must be laid in deep humility: "Though my life be wasted in grief, my path in life laid out in tears, my years in sighs; though hunger should overtake me and lay his bony fingers upon me, my strength be weakened in poverty; though I am a reproach to all my enemies, and to many of my neighbors, though they that see me pass should take quick flight and I be forgotten as one dead from the heart, I have put my trust in Thee, O Lord," says David. In fever and in want, in sore temptations, in anguish, in approbrium, in ingratitude, in contempt, through the long journey of Israel, by deserts of burning sands, through camps of fierce warriors, through persecutions, famines and wars, our eyes of hope shall be bent heavenward to catch the signs in the heavens, the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night, with the faith of Moses and the confidence of the wise men who trusted the Star, and meekly surrendered to its mute guidance on to unknown lands. We will cling to our faith through all, with the prophet's hope that in the end the God of Israel, the Saviour of our souls, and the Father of our destinies, after having proven our trust in Him, will 'lead us into the right land.' "Who indeed can boast," says St. Bernard, "that he is among the number of the chosen; that he is of those God had predestinated

to glory: we know nothing for certain about it, but we have hope, and our hope comforts us." Why should we foresee? Foresight is God's prerogative, more especially where it touches upon free acts: we can enjoy a moral foresight, not truly infallible, but yet soothing and sufficiently sure: If we are determined upon doing our Christian duty in all things and at all times, and to overcome all temptations: we thus morally foresee that we do nothing to prevent our election to glory: "Strive by good works to make your vocation and election certain," says the Apostle. Why should God disclose to the doomed their piteous lot? The knowledge belongs to God. Besides seeming to discolor their freedom, such a sad announcement would only rob them of their hope. When the Grecian slave was on the point of being put to death for having spread the false report of a victory, he saved his life by exclaiming: "Am I to be blamed, O Athenians, who have given you one happy day?" As yet the living had not merited it: it is full time, alas, when their crimes have been done, their malice computed, for the awful judgment and sentence: "Depart from Me ye cursed into everlasting fire." If indeed we are to be saved, as mariners say, we should head our vessels on to the port we seek. We may have to beat the wind, tack, luff, or at times lay-to, but only as a means at all times of the more securely reaching our destiny. To us Catholics the word of St. Paul bears a very particular reference: that if the natural branches

have been cast off, we ought to fear; for, the sons of Abraham are, as it were, the natural sons of God, and we but the grafted branches and adopted children. Shall the Father endure more from the latter than the former? Our fears should still further develop out of the fact that we cannot merit final perseverance. This is a gift of God. According to the Sacred Scriptures and the Fathers of the Church, our final perseverance is a matter of uncertainty as long as we dwell in this vale of tears. Our vessels are frail, and life's sea surges and foams — angrily at times. There are storms far out on the deep, there are still greater perils near the shore. There is always danger for any man of losing his soul, through want of prudence or lack of care. History tells us, and especially the pathetic, unwritten history of our own observation, that more than a few have fought and won battles on the plains of youth and manhood, who yet fell away and were conquered at last, leaving sad fears after them as an inheritance to their friends. The name of Judas Iscariot, prince-elect of Christ's kingdom — a name once honored, is but a specimen of one station and of one man. A mortal sin — a thought, an unholy wish, and God may justly strike down the bold intruder upon the domain of His sanctity, falling upon the victim then and there in the heat of his unholy lust, injustice or pride. The dispositions of those worldly Christians who can slumber with this possible fate hovering over their pillows are an enigma to the

serious. The fear of God seems to have been erased from the tablet of their hearts. God's mercies are beyond number. No saint can ever measure their extent. No man ought ever to lose hope in them. But the abuse of His graces is treasured up, and no man can reckon how soon or how late, or if ever the fury of God's wrath will break forth with corresponding measure in the catastrophe of an unexpected and unprepared — for death. "Behold," says St. Augustine, "how foul of the truth they are, who deny that it is a gift from God to persevere to the last, when we perceive that it rests in God's hands to put an end upon our earthly existence according to His own good pleasure, when if He sends death to anyone before an impending fall He grants such a one perseverance to the end." St. Thomas likewise says: "We do not disavow the special protection of God, whereby He preserves the just from temptation, dangers, seductions, and occasions of sin — from which, for the most part, our active perseverance depends, — is often a perceptibly wonderful thing, which is not common to all the just. Let the just earnestly seek after it, ask it, and by their prayers merit it." If we endeavor to lead an unblemished life, one in harmony with Christianity, we cannot do so for a long space without special grace from the Lord. Men will count on the singular event of God's coming in on them at their deathbed, when they shall have spent their lives in riotous living and practical irreligion, and laying upon their death-

bed the glories and the crown it has taken others a lifetime to weave. A man who had lived a century in untarnished purity of soul, in unwavering piety and strictest fidelity to grace, may, to be sure, in the twinkling of an eye — say, through grievous self-complacency and a shocking presumption — forfeit grace, die that very instant and be lost. And, on the other hand, the most hardened criminal, the product of a long lifetime of sin, may feel the touch of mercy just upon the point of expiring, fear God, and confess, and even die in the full bloom of love, by an act of perfect contrition, and seize the crown after one foot had been in hell. Though the proportion of our fear need be no more than as the quantity of salt to that of the food over which it is sprinkled to give it flavor, the piety of all must be seasoned by a wise fear to the very end, lest we be lost. Now, as before, St. Paul's fervid warning, too, will be to our mind and heart a divine law of perseverance — "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling."

CHAPTER XI.

THE NUMBER OF THE ELECT.

“AND a certain man said to Him, Lord, are they few that are saved, but He said to them, Strive to enter by the narrow gate, for many I say to you shall seek to enter and shall not be able.” (Luke xiii, 23, 24.) Many shall desire to be saved; but, for want of taking sufficient pains, and of being thoroughly in earnest, shall not attain to it (Note in Douay.)—“For many are called, but few are chosen.” (Mat. xx, 16.) It depends upon the measure of one’s authority, of which one must demonstrate a just claim for the exercise, whether he may as an author employ the authoritative and arbitrary expression—“I say to you.” It carries with it a striking emphasis; it reveals the red color of the wax, — the stamp of the crown, the august weight and dignity of the king’s seal, which commands swift, indiscriminating obedience—in the name of the king! You do not perceive it, but ‘I say to you’ it is so. It does seem as if the Master would thus intimate that He foresaw the controversies that must find birth in the gloomy mystery of man’s final election, the collision of our human judgments with the ‘incomprehensible judgments’ of the Divinity. Does not the Divine oracle seem to forewarn us against an unbalanced conception of His attributes,

one that might underrate the conditions of salvation, turn God's just terrors into a sham, rob the Christian life of its seriousness and unclothe the love of God of its dignity? Draw a dark impervious veil over the sanctuary of justice, and lo, that fatal slumber upon souls, the dangerous and impudent temerity of proud mortals, the arrogant assurances, the false hopes of self-love. What then? "Watch ye therefore for you know not when the Lord of the house cometh: at even or at midnight, or at the cock crowing, or in the morning. Lest coming on a sudden, He find you sleeping. And what I say to you I say to all: Watch." (Luke xiii, 35, 6, 7.) "For all you are the children of light and children of the day: we are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep as others do, but let us watch and be sober." (1st Thes. v, 6.) The Master was put the fierce query: "Are they few that are saved?" It has been asked in every age of pensive churchmen; we ask it to-day. The oracle that could speak and tell us is silent. The ground is quaggy and we cannot set an untremulous foot upon the rock of Peter with the full weight of complete conviction until we have reached it.

The question is a solemn and mighty one—that calls for the saint and the sage at once to speak, for, two perils stand and frown on either side of the respondent. 'The narrow gate' has its Scylla and Charybdis, the danger of injudiciously softening the rigors of religion and the judgments of a just God, thus inducing the peril of false ease

for multitudes of immortal souls; and on the other hand the equal danger of draping the sweet countenance of God with an undue severity that would blight in myriad bosoms the tender blossom of a hope that must otherwise bloom forever in Paradise. Though the Church is dumb, the words of Jesus echo mournfully in our ears with their terrible force and dreadful uncertainty unchanged by time. Wise Providence has so willed it. The silence of the Church on the number of the chosen indulges us with the blessings of broad hope, whilst it does not allow us to rid ourselves of the requisite salutary though painful fears. We cannot listen to the Master's words "Many are called, but few are chosen," nor give ear to those others that were uttered in a reply to a direct, pointed question: "Many shall seek to enter and shall not be able," and then pass on unaffected by them. They echo in our ears, they haunt us like a strange melody in a minor chord,—they impress us. Our hearts are not fully at rest. They furnish no food for the subsistence of despair; yet presumption cannot thrive upon them. This is God's wise economy, for He came to save the world, and must save the two classes, the timid and the presumptuous. The Lord's words are as clear to us as they were to those whom He addressed in person. What impression did they make on the Jews? The same impression that they make on us. They awakened commingled hope and dread.

Genér, a Spaniard of large erudition and of accepted ability plunges into comparison of the

number of the predestinated with that of the lost souls. He is a fair sample of the pulse of modern schoolmen on the subject of this comparison. He says: "Out of the mass of all the faithful adults that have dwelt in the bosom of the Church, from the beginning, there are far more saved than lost." The basis of this view is thus set forth: "Because the faithful are the chosen people of God, and so the numberless pledges in which the goodness of God is shown to be for 'saving all,' for having 'all come unto Him,' and 'none to perish,' should have a special application to the faithful." He adds that these are the 'vessels of mercy' upon which God 'shows the riches of His glory' (Romans ix, 23), and from this number the choirs of saints are made up: "After this I saw a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and tribes, and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and in sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands." (Apoc. vii, 9.) Génér, however, comes nearer to comforting us when he sees the comparative number of the final classes shadowed forth in the parable of the king's marriage-feast, where only 'one was found among the guests who had not the wedding garments.' Out of the mass of all mankind the number of the predestinated is much larger than has been commonly opined. In any case the number of the saved is not less than the number of the lost. Of those who are not ranked as faithful, there are not so many lost as is generally

supposed, because the Church has countless hosts of unknown children of whom she will one day say: "Who hath begotten these, and where were they?" (Isaias xlix, 21.)

Some conclude from the parable of the 'five virgins' that as many shall be saved as lost. The foundation of this last conjecture, namely, one favoring the coequalness of the two kingdoms, that of the Lord and that of Satan, is established on the idea of the impropriety of Satan being able to boast a wider range of sovereignty than Jesus. Would it not be a reflection on the majesty and clemency of heaven if Satan should command larger hosts than the Prince of the Most High? they ask. It is our heartfelt, fervid supplication that Christ's kingdom shall flourish; our blushes would become red furnaces of hot shame if we were to see the prince of darkness brandish his sceptre in Christ's face and mock the Eternal King, as the Jews, when they bruised His fair temples with a crown of thorns, and courtesied before Him in mock reverence. Fancy the wild shrieks of the blasphemer: "If Thou be the Son of God, save us:" But, "Jerusalem! Jerusalem! . . . thou wouldst not." Yes, man is free, and God will not take, though we all perish, our liberty from us. Must God save us? Shall God take it out of our hands by suppressing our freedom? Shame is man's, not God's, and no shame can ever touch God. All things glorify Him, and hell itself adds its note of just but unwilling praise.

The conjecture, I avow, apart from its mental strength and the vigor of its logic, bears honorable and pious evidence of a heart that loves the Master's kingdom; is devoured with a soldierly zeal to spread the Lord's empire. With all our faults our hearts are ever with the Master; and still like Peter, we can and will sin, even whilst that awful echo haunts our memory and will not die away: O were it another's word we might not take it so much to heart; but it is His, and, in its mildest whisper, though softly and not loudly spoken, it breeds a cold terror, that no human conjecture can dispel — "Few are chosen."

But stay! The view of Suarez on the number of the chosen inspires the moderns with cheer. He is the guardian angel of the *mildists*, in their broad and most hopeful opinions touching on the predominating number of the predestinate even among the grown faithful. True, any opinion offered by such an illustrious theologian deserves respect. He says: "If by Christians we understand those only who die in the Catholic Church, it seems to me more likely, under the law of Grace, that the greater number of these are saved. The reason is because, first of all, of those who die before they are grown up, the great multitude die baptized; and the adults, though the greater number of men often sin mortally, get up again after falling, and thus pass their lives, rising and falling. Then again, there are but few who are not prepared for death by the sacraments, and do not grieve over their

sins, at least by attrition; and this is enough to justify them at that time; and after their justification the time left them is so short that they can easily persevere, and do so, without any fresh mortal sin. Therefore, all things taken into account, it is probable that the majority of Christians in this stricter sense are saved." The *mild* tell us that the *grain* is always more abundant than the *cockle*; that the *good fishes* invariably outnumber the *bad*. They further assert that in the parable of the *talents*, two were rewarded and but one punished.

Do you droop under the weight of too heavy fears, and it chances these parables furnish you with the staff to aid your journey, accept the proffered aid, and may your burden be lighter for the new strength you feel. Of course, the staff may break — these views are not infallible: lean on them, but do not impose all your weight on them. You might lose all fear and fall, and die on your broken staff. Our Mother, the Church, has not spoken on the number of the chosen. Do you welcome the gentle Suarez to your homes to brighten your hearts with his benignant, hopeful, radiant face? Suarez presumes reasonably that all who approach the sacraments, eat and drink the Saviour's Flesh and Blood worthily. On this presumption, as most Catholic adults die with the sacraments, they all, generally speaking, should be saved.

But may I ask if the Blessed Leonard of Port Maurice is rash in stating that 'a great number

of Christians are lost, because their confessions are null through want of true sorrow?' When we consider that contrition calls for a sorrow for the past and a determination for the future, may we not fear that at least some men approach the altar perfunctorily, or by way of an external accomplishment of an ecclesiastic precept at Easter, or by mere force of custom of 'making the mission,' or as a matter of natural fear? Is there not a danger lest the firm purpose of amendment be lacking in the character of a true sacramental resolve?

What an ominous sound it has — "Few are chosen." Jesus saw clearly the number of the elect. He saw they were few. They cannot be more nor less than He foresaw. Shift it about, look at it on all sides, we cannot change it; it always meant, and now means, what Christ said: "Few are chosen."

St. Chrysostom stood in the pulpit at Antioch. The multitude was vast and still in his great presence: he pauses; his face grows prophetic with a strange message that lay written on the tablet of his heart. Who wrote the message? "What I am about to divulge will strike terror to your hearts," said the saint, "but I cannot refrain." He then spoke his terrible message: "Out of so many thousands that go to make up the vast city, that in importance and population is second to none, hardly one hundred will be saved." Antioch was a Christian city; religion was said to flourish; the bulk of Christians lived

commonly well, sacraments were patronized with normal fidelity, and the ordinary piety of Christianity prevailed. Who wrote that message? If the great saint could not refrain from uttering such a woful, dismal document, must heaven have revealed it to him? We know not, neither do we know that this dreadful prophecy affects us. Perhaps, after this prophecy, the people of Antioch were saved because they heeded the warning like the Ninevites. Consider the oracle, Chrysostom! a great doctor and saint praised before our tabernacle: "Our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all, as Moses, were baptized in the cloud and in the sea, and they all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink: but with most of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the desert. "Now, these things," adds St. Paul, "were done in a figure of us." The Israelites numbered upward of six hundred thousand, exclusive of the women and children, yet only Caleb and Joshua were chosen to enter the Promised Land, drink in the glories of hills and lakes, and taste its milk and honey. We all, as Christian men, must pass through a sea of tribulation and tears: how often like the thunder of the physical heavens, the rumbling of the groans and the sharp sounds of killing grief, bespeak the valley of tears in the human heart. We are all baptized, we eat the Bread of Life, shall I say that few of us reach the Promised Land? Let Him speak Who has a right to speak. "For

many, I say to you, shall seek to enter and shall not be able." St. Peter draws a conclusion from the Deluge and the Ark, "in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water." The world had existed for nearly two thousand years, and the human family had outgrown computation and had filled the earth. Noah and his family alone were saved, "whereunto baptism being of like form." The sacrament of baptism is equipped with power to save us, but not all who are baptized shall effectually be saved. We must co-operate with its grace, and persevere to the end, if we would wear the crown. In baptism, we, as it were, enter the lists; we step upon the course; the goal is yonder and we must run to seize it. Why did St. Peter mention the fact that but eight souls had been saved out of that vast number? Because many are called, but few are chosen, and he thus stated the fact. In Genesis, the nineteenth chapter records the sad fate that fell on Sodom and Gomorrha, when "brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven" fell in a sudden and deadly shower that consumed all their inhabitants, and put a quietus upon every living creature. No mortal grieved, not an insect moved, not a leaf stirred, when strangers and neighbors came to express their condolence. The ruin was complete. Lot and his family were the only dwellers of the doomed cities that eluded the fatal sulphur and consuming fires, by timely escape through heavenly intervention, and a divine warning of the impending doom. This is

a picture of eternal punishment. "As Sodom and Gomorrha and the neighboring cities, in like manner having given themselves over to fornication, and going after other flesh, were made an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire." (St. Jude.) The shadows of these thrilling events shoot across Hope's path. They are like passing clouds, they modulate the dazzling light, but are not destined to overwhelm us with their gloom. No darkness should shut out the golden ray of an immortal hope; only the dark hand of Satan would intercept that beam, and wrap the soul in the black darkness of despair. We read in St. John that out of the great crowds of sick, blind and lame, that lay in the porches of the Pond Probatica, awaiting the coming of the angel to stir up the waters, only one was healed. "He that went down first into the pond;" again the strange minority; again that haunting dread. Only, only, never simply all. Isaias announces the prophetic judgment of the world: "and few men shall be left." How painfully, how strangely, the words of the prophet and the Saviour's own words match—"Few are chosen," said Jesus, "few men shall be left," said Isaias. At the crack of doom, when the "City of Vanity" is broken down; "every house is shut up." "It shall be thus, in the midst of earth, in the midst of the people, as of a few olives that remain should be shaken off the olive tree, or grapes, when the vintage is ended." (Isaias xxiv.) When the harps of sinners shall be hung up for-

ever, the timbrels of the doomed shall resound no more, the merry drinking songs shall perish from the lips, and heavy sighs of regret and anguish shall supplant the merry lays. These, the few olives, the few grapes, that remain, the few virtuous and good ones, "shall lift up their voice and shall give praise." Such witnesses darken our cause, but if truth be on our side, if we have not deserved sad judgment by our voluntary evil life, peace be to us. These heavenly truths do annoy our human palate with their bitterness; but they are meant by God, the world's Great Physician, as an antidote to our proud judgments, and a stimulant to our drowsy inactivity. Christ desired to rouse our indolent spirit, to make us active in the vineyard, gathering, not lounging, earning the wages of virtue—life, not 'the wages of sin'—death. We are not surprised when we are informed that we must *run* to win the *race*, and 'strive for the mastery.' No dispute ever arises when we are taught that the price of the *crown* is the *cross*, yet, when the Master announced that 'many are called, but few are chosen,' we quarrel with Him. We accepted the conditions of salvation, and Christ, Our Lord, now repeats the conditions of the compact, and simply warns us that we are not paying the price we agreed upon; that we are not realizing the conditions of salvation. He says, 'you are not watching, you are not praying, you are not keeping the Commandments, you are not living a Christian life; bestir yourselves, then, or you

will be lost.' Our Lord says many are not co-operating with the grace He so magnanimously vouchsafes them. He says few are living according to Christian standard—few are chosen. The Master states a future fact, as He sees it, but not as He made it. Our Lord says that the most of men are idlers in the vineyard, and He complains, and He warns them. The Judgment Day has not yet come. Christ's words are not our judgments. He knows His own standard, statutes and laws. He foresees what our judgments will inevitably be if we continue to live as perhaps you and I are living now. He raises the danger signals to notify the Christian mariner to so ordain his life as to meet the terrors of justice. The rapid, treacherous currents go before the tempest, blowing the dust into our eyes, carrying off loose and light objects, banging our shutters, to notify us in time to meet the storm. He sees our danger, and comes to us as a friend, privately, and says, be careful, watch out.

Instead of thanking His Divine goodness and worshipping more deeply His vast mercies, and taking His word, as it was intended, for a new evidence of His good-will and dearest friendship toward us, instead of heeding Him and taking the hint to mend our evil ways, we give Jesus the contrary of grateful thanks. We say, He is all too just, too cruel. Alas, the Jews misunderstood Him, misconstrued Him, and would not understand His love; neither do we. Why, brethren,

this I say is not our judgment, nor sentence; this is not the requiem of our Christian life; 'tis the voice of the Good Shepherd Who calls us from the pastures of guilt, 'tis the voice of Jesus. A large number will be saved. According to the common opinion of the Holy Fathers, God predestinated the race of mankind to fill the vacant places of the rebel angels. St. Augustine has written as follows: "God gathered from the race of mortals, lying rejected and under just condemnation, a host of people by His grace, to fill up and restore the position lost by the angels." St. Anselm as well agrees that we may safely say, there will be people and generations of men on this earth until the number of angels is completed. Now what is the number of the angels? We cannot compute their number—"Is there any numbering of His soldiers?" asks Job. "Count if you can the sands of the sea," echoes Bossuet. The common opinion, built up on the text of St. John in the Apocalypse, 'and the tail of the dragon drew down a third part of the stars of heaven,' is that one-third of the angels fell from grace. A large number of mankind are saved, but it is a question whether Our Lord decided that more will be lost than saved of the faithful. Fusing the saints and angels, we may say that there will be more in the eternal glory of heaven than will be cast into the everlasting shame of reprobation—"In the multitude of His people lieth the glory of the King, the ignominy of the prince in the scantiness of his nation." If we take in all mankind, pagans

and heretics included, there is no temerity in stating that by far the larger number will be lost. If we embrace Christians only, taking into account the children who have died with the character of baptism, we may say that more are saved than lost. If, lastly, we narrow ourselves down to Christian adults, we may safely take Christ's word, that more are lost than saved. This has always been the prevailing opinion. The faithful are by excellence "the called," and "few" of even these are eventually chosen to assume glory. We must not conclude from this word "few are chosen" that it was intended in God's design to minimize, or in any way decrease our legitimate hopes of eternal rest. The Master did not intend that any man should be so far affected by His prophecy as to renounce his piety or decrease his zeal. To take it for granted that he is for the doomed, would be a prostitution and vile abuse of the Lord's words, and a blasphemous frustration of God's plan, conceived in His Divine charity. We may justly and piously have fears of being found among the lost, but despair is contrary to all virtue. Humility is not despair, pious fear is not despondency. Despondency would only open a way to irreligion and to every excess of passion and disorder. The Master's word justly humbles us. Our hope lies in our own hope in Christ. When the light of hope is extinguished in the human breast, the long eternity of darkness has begun. Not to have hope enough is indeed a sin and a crime; too much hope, that is hope without fear, is presumption.

If one is to be saved, we all have equal rights to hope that each of us is that one, for God is not a respecter of persons. Christ intended in His mercy to excite us to be of the few that are chosen. Let the dead bury the dead. Our destiny lies with the few who shall live. You and I cannot doubt that God wills us to be found among the few. It is no paradox: Our business lies not with the many. Let others go their way. They, like ourselves, are free. Upon our task let us bestow our best energies, the highest and fullest powers at our command, and if necessary, our very life. Many saints and martyrs passed out from mortal life in their adolescence and youth. The inducements to live on in the world with the many — riches, honors and pleasures, lay at their feet, a long life with the many who tread the broad way, or a short existence with the few, who pace the narrow path. The longest earthly life is short when compared with infinite futurity — and all things pass away. Choose, then, with Sebastian and Cecilia, with Francis and Clare, with Ignatius and Theresa, ‘the one thing necessary’ — eternal life. We cannot erase such words as St. Gregory’s, “Many come to the faith, and few are ushered into the kingdom of heaven, for the most of men are faithful to God in word and abandon Him in their way of living. Two things should emerge from this fact: firstly, that no one should of himself be guilty of presumption, because, although you are called to the faith, you do not know whether you shall be

elected to the kingdom of heaven; secondly, that we must not dare despair of our neighbor, whose life we see is given over to vice." We cannot cancel such authority, nor abate the fierceness of its testimony. If, indeed, we may sadly believe that so great a number of the grown faithful, our own brethren, shall be consigned to the dismal dungeon of darkness and unspeakable horror forever, if indeed we do believe and fear not rashly that the grave shall separate us — by God's grace — forever from them, save for that one brief moment, when together we shall stand before the judgment-seat, not to speak, but to listen to the judgment delivered to the elect and the reprobated, and when we shall have learned our blissful future, shall still in silence look, but not speak to the lost, the long, aye, the everlasting — what? — farewell? — good-bye? — adieu? But such a word spoken by tongue or eye, look or gesture, would be bitter irony, and so an untruth, that cannot dwell in the bosom of the children of eternal truth; they must suffer eternal torments. The elected ones cannot, must not, then wish it otherwise — "Thy will be done." *Consummatum est* — it is all over with, mourned the feeble voice of Jesus on His deathbed. His sufferings were ended, His glory and joys beginning. *Consummatum est!* exclaims the unhappy chorus of silent faces of the doomed. The will of God decrees the sad eternity. The chosen souls, without a parting sign, withdraw to heaven, and leave the unfortunate multitude, among whom

the faces of many they had loved on earth, and to whom the ties of kinship or religion had bound them, to their dark doom. If, I say, we may so be persuaded, let it not seem that we would deny the loving mercy of heaven, or that the character of God's conduct toward mankind, especially Christ's own beautiful, fervid words and adorable life, tells of aught but of mercy as the prevailing spirit of the Father and the Son in Their dealings with the world. The very lips that will pronounce the judgment are the same that called these doomed to repentance. Even as the judgment is delivered, the red wounds shall say how Jesus wished it otherwise. The hand that shall wave the lost to their bitter future shall be the blood-stained hand that was fastened to the cross, that these same doomed should be set free from their chains of sin. Let it not seem as though we intimated the impossibility of every man winning a crown; nay, it fully consists with this stand that God calls us all, provides us all with heavenly grace in fertile abundance, which we are free to use and be saved, or abuse and be lost. If the many, or an equal portion, are lost, it is their own perverse wills and evil lives that brought them to their sad fate. God was only too eager to forgive their crimes, if they repented. The ignorance of many may prove their final bliss, but God can neither deceive nor be deceived, and He alone will decide the degree of culpable or involuntary ignorance.

I confess, indeed, that we who dwell in a land where the strict canonical discipline has not yet

reached its maturity, may be too quick in passing over the soft impression of Suarez. We dwell, alas, in heretical countries, where many sheep of Christ roam wild over the unfenced plains, unknown or unclaimed by the Shepherd. In Catholic countries the flocks are so divided that each priest knows his sheep: "I know Mine and Mine know Me." He can look to it, and must, as a dutiful priest, see that religious duties are faithfully performed by each and every one. He counts the faces of his flock at Easter time; he sprinkles each with the Blood of the Lamb. As yet, we have not arrived at the highest development to which, under our divine and zealous episcopate, we hope to attain, when our financial means will allow. Each priest shall know each soul, like the shepherd knows each sheep in his fold, and the father knows his children, and can run after the lost ones and bring them back to the faith. This being presumably the case in Catholic countries, we might consider with more respect the doctrine of the profound and learned theologian and devout religious, the tenor of which is, that the large majority of adult Catholics shall be chosen. Nothing, I reiterate, has been definitely declared on the question of the comparative number of the elected souls.

God's providence is in all, from the direction of the tiniest rill and the least movement of the sparrow, up to the care of nations, of the universe, and the motherly providence of our souls' dearest, least and universal interests. In the

division of opinions, the mercy of God renews the prodigy of the heaven-sent manna in the desert. It adapts itself to all our tastes, and fashions itself to all our peculiar needs: To the over-fearful ones, timid and shivering, with a deeper terror than is salutary — to you Christ says what He said to Peter, when the Apostle fell down under a crushing dread at the Master's feet, forced to the earth by the weight of his own sinfulness, as expressed by his words, 'depart from me for I am a sinful man,' — to you, I say, Christ says: "Do not fear." The wants of the great multitude of idlers and slothful are appeased, and their hunger satiated by the manna, for the consent of ages sends out the fierce and piercing shriek: "Many are called, but few are chosen;" to awaken them to the business of eternal salvation. For you, my brethren, who earnestly endeavor to preserve God's grace in your hearts, or who, falling, contrite and humble, speedily rise, — to you the lightest fears and the weightiest hopes belong by every right. Be assiduously humble, you of the cloister; and you brethren of the world, be not swollen up with your own conceits, and then you need not greatly fear but you shall enter by the narrow gate. That gate is low as well as narrow, and our spirits must bend, and our rigid, stiff-necked pride must yield to the task of entering in. When Saul pursued him, David cried out: "Why pursuest thou me? thou pursuest a dead dog." — "God raiseth up the needy from the earth, and lifteth up the poor from the

dunghill, that He may place them with the princes of His people." Ask for the crown of perseverance. Why do you falter? What! you say you are too unworthy? If you are sincere, and are the least, you have the highest right to ask a saint's portion of the Master's kingdom. What is that you say?—"I will speak to my Lord, whereas I am dust and ashes." (Genesis xviii, 27.) And lo, the Voice: "Enter into the joy of thy Lord." Oh, all ye sainted ones, who have fought the good fight, and have entered already into coronal joys, forget not your exiled brethren of earth, still in the strife. Fairest of the fair, by grace our Mother, gentle advocate, shepherdess of Israel, be ever with us in life. Thy protection, thy love, thine intercession in our behalf before thy Divine Son, will soften the terrors of the night and the awful gloom of death—Fair Lady, ask it of the Master for mine and me,—aye, for all mankind, the grace to hear in judgment the happy words: "Come ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matth. xxv, 34.)

CHAPTER XII.

AM I OF THE CHOSEN?

WE have dwelt upon the comparative number of the elect,—a weighty, interesting and important theme; but, our first charity is found at our own fireside; so, we proceed on our journey homeward. We are delighted that many shall obtain final rest in God. Whoso they be, we extend our felicitations, cordial and deep, to the unknown elect. But we cannot pause here very long: we must hasten to our chief interest, a more intimate concern, the one bound up in the terrific question for each of us—a fair question, a direct one. We should not blink it. Grant, from the bad way you are living, your prescience of an unfavorable reply but too correct: Brethren, it is yet time, and we may alter our life so as to face the question with clear and solid hopes. Tremendous question! — Am I one of the chosen? Shall I find lasting peace with God? Shall I possess the kingdom prepared by the Father of us all for those who love Him? What matters if we answer no to aught or even all else if we can but say yes to this question — “What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?”

An infallible certitude, a perfect assurance, such as by the force of the fact abolishes all fears and

allows no margin for confidence, is a false prospect. This is the defective vision of old age: it sees only afar — it sees the undoubted grandeurs of God and His mercies without number, and does not observe the doubtful genuineness of one's own disposition and the truthfulness of his co-operation. The highest assurance we can attain to is a moral one. It is always more than possible that we shall be lost. It is never absolutely impossible for us to lose our souls. Examine your own heart, gather the fruits of your own observations of men, and say if it would not be a knowledge too perilous for any but the rarest souls if God should make known to them by special revelation their final election. A John the Baptist, — whose eminent sanctity rose above the crowd of saints, as the Cedar of Lebanon towers over its leafy brethren of the forest, but whose humility imparted to his soul the solidity of the massive oak — could have borne such knowledge and stood firm and unshaken in the consciousness of his own unworthiness, — for 'a greater than John was not born of woman.' We reverently set aside the Mother of the Lord — we shall not write of her, nor speak of her comparatively. Jesus could tell His mother anything — the Mother of Humility: she is beyond the saints; she is — Mary! — "Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." Pride is ingrained in us; its shadow is upon us all — the spot most like to be found on the robe of each

saintship — that slight, almost imperceptible discoloration — say a shadow. We know of but one gown, of clear unsmirched brightness, without a shade — the Virgin's. We cannot be saved without the grace of perseverance, and this we cannot merit. No one will deny the graces poured out on Solomon. Judas Iscariot belonged to the state of Christian perfection. He was an Apostle of the Lord.

Am I predestinated?—"Who knoweth the Mind of the Lord" (Romans 13.) Shall I be saved? The word is pronounced for all time: "No one knoweth whether he be worthy of hatred or love." But I am the High Pontiff; I am a priest; I am a religious; I am a king; I am a rich man: I am a learned man. It does not matter. "What I say to you I to say to all" "Watch"—"*No* man knows." I ask myself whether I be of the chosen, and I must reply to myself that I do not know. This, my only true answer, disheartens at first, but the effect stops short of evil excess, being overtaken by the timely reflection, that after all it is God's will that it be so: It is Wisdom's design, to test me, and in this way discover if I be worthy of God's love and the high reward of heaven. He will not compel me to the nuptials of the Lamb, nor drag me by violence to my wedding with eternal glory. I choose God, my eternal Love, with an honorable and uncompulsory freedom. This sweet reflection and soothing recollection brings serene peace to me. Yes, it is God's will; this is enough. And how vastly better His will

to mine ! I know God loves me, and upon the altar of that sacred affection I lay down with a free and happy heart all my destinies. I shall not ever seek that absolute certainty which my God, my Sovereign, and my Love, does not wish me to know. It is for His interests and my own. I obey and content myself with the less infallible, but more pious and confident, moral assurance. This is not heaven. It would not be any longer earth if I were to know infallibly my future ; moreover, earth is a probation. Our Lord laid down His life for me. He saw me clearly from the Cross as I stand before you ; He distinguished me from the crowd ; He marked off each one of us from all the rest. His life was for me. His life was for each one of you.

The cardinal fact of my predestination is a true and deep faith, full of admiration for, and hope in, Jesus Christ. When all the lights of the world about us are quenched, and we are left solitary, it is Good Friday in the soul : the pallid face of the dying Saviour should be visible to us—our One Love. That form should be the central fact in our life. Clear, sad and grand, the white face and limbs uncovered to disclose an unblemished whiteness, stand out, revealing the sacred form of Jesus, our beloved Master, whilst there is let down from the sky a drapery of inky darkness for a background, and over Him is spread a canopy of ethereal mourning, sustained by two white human pillars, representing Mercy and Justice—the penitent and the impenitent thieves.—Behold the dead Christ !

He rests on the easel of the Cross, your Model. He died for all men. All men, then, are sculptors.

Are you of the chosen? If so, you are charged with the noble but arduous task of reproducing in your lives the external features of your Master's, combined with the internal character of His beautiful life. The Crucifix is the epitome of the Saviour's life. Here we shall find all: "For whom He foresaw He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son," says St. Paul. Sublime task! but one that teems with difficulties: to produce in our life a resemblance to the character of Jesus Christ!—Yes, and out of the rough mass of human flesh, the block of human clay that has feelings, that declines stubbornly the chisel and resists throughout the intrusions of the hammer: "I see another law in My members fighting against the law of My mind." (Romans, 7-23.)

"Hath not the potter power over the clay?" To become 'vessels of mercy' the laws of Jesus Christ must be at work in us and rule supremely over us. God's will must supplant our own—"O, man, who art thou that repliest against God; shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, why hast Thou made me thus?" (Romans, ix, 20.) "For the end of the law is Christ." (Romans, x, 4.) The old laws of human flesh and perverse instincts must be repealed and swept away. Human passions must surrender to the Crucifix; but, a sterile contemplation will not.

answer—"Every one that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things. I, therefore, so run, not as an uncertainty; I so fight, not as one beating the air," says St. Paul. We are brought hither to do battle and overcome. We have an enemy—our own flesh; and our sword should, and must pierce our flesh. Our bodies must feel the hostility and the stinging blows: "I chastise my body and bring it into subjection." (Corinthians, ix, 27.) Christ's death says death upon our bodies: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin may be destroyed, and that we may serve sin no longer." (Romans, vi, 6.)

Like the sweeping Deluge, that bore away all corruption from earth, the crimson avalanche of mercies descending from Calvary must carry away, by heroic violence, the corruption of sin from our lives. Flesh and blood will mutter and argue and groan, and finally resist—"For we know that every creature groaneth, and is in labor even till now." (Romans, viii, 22.) Passion dies hard, and argues every inch of the way; but the laws of Jesus Christ have decreed death unto them. To the gibbet then with them, brethren; to the gallows with your bodies—on to Calvary! Let your senses be crucified, like your Adorable Model: "And if Christ be in you the body indeed is dead because of sin, but the spirit liveth because of justification," says St. Paul.

The first sign of our predestination is, then, our likeness to Jesus Christ in our bodily life—

“For if you live according to the flesh you shall die, but if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh you shall live.” (Romans, viii, 13.)

What say those ashen faces, half stern, half tender, half rigid, half yielding, half alive, half dead, we so often see in God’s elected children and saints, with the air of the grave about them, mingled with the serenity of a higher born peace than earth’s, spread over their countenances — Christ-like faces that rebuke the consciences of men with a mere glance? They are God’s saints — dead, as it were; they pass in and pass out amongst us — dead to the world, and alive only to God: “For we are buried together with Him by baptism unto death.” (Romans, vi, 1.) Are your bodies subdued — “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of iniquity unto sin, but present yourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead.” Do your passions still hold the mastery over you? Have you not banished faith, your rightful sovereign, and abolished the empire of grace reared in your soul by the power of baptism? — “Know you not that all we who are baptized in Christ Jesus are baptized in His death?” On that day we all welcomed Christ to our hearts. The powers of evil had been dethroned and driven out from us, and the reign of grace solemnly inaugurated — “So do you also reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus, Our Lord.” (Romans, vi, 11.) Is your every appetite

brought under the sway of faith and the government of grace?

On the threshold of our reason our noble Christian mothers greeted us with the Catechism in their hands. Who made you? God. Why did God make you? That I might know Him, love Him, and *serve* Him in this world, and by so doing be forever happy with Him in the next. This was our answer. The highest, the one necessary knowledge and study of our life is to know God and Jesus Christ—"That the God of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him." (Ephesians, 117.) But this is not to be a barren knowledge, but rather one to apply—"and *serve* Him in this world.' We cannot serve two Masters. Are we the servants of God in our bodies—"Know you not that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are whom you obey, whether it be of sin unto death, or obedience unto justice." (Romans, vi, 16.) Does the law of sin prevail in your bodily life? Does passion, even when it swoops down upon the soul, like a fierce whirlwind, overthrow and sweep away the grace of God from your hearts?—"Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body so as to obey the lusts thereof." (Romans, vi, 12.) There can be no fellowship of light with darkness, there can be no compromise of grace with sin, there can be no joint brotherhood, no oligarchy. The soul is

a kingdom, one God, one Lord, one King, one Shepherd.

What say your consciences? Do they reply in virtuous, calm and confident accents that you have copied Jesus Christ, your Model, in your bodily life? Has unhallowed lust burned the soul as in a hot furnace? Has brutish intemperance, or swinish gluttony, or any other human passion ruled you?—"As you have yielded your members to serve uncleanness and iniquity unto iniquity, so now yield your members to serve Justice unto sanctification." (Romans, vi, 19.) This clear, white marble purity of their moral statue in his predestinated appeared to the eyes of God before the Ages: "As He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and unspotted in His sight in charity." (Ephesians, 1.)

"Two things," remarked St. Augustine, "take place beyond this world, and these two things we cannot know: election before this world and glory after it. Two things occur within the confines of it which we should all know: God *calls us* out from the world and *justifies us* in it." This confirms what we have been saying. We may ascertain from the test the first *sign* of predestination: are we of this world? Do we satisfy each natural wish of the body? Do we pamper every earthly desire, satisfy every earthly craving, and feel no bondage of Christ's laws? Do we feel the restraints of our holy religion, its persistent censorship on our morals, its constant

inhibitions, its unceasing, unending taunting, — the curb and bit fastened upon our natural liberties? Living here below with the feelings and laws of a nature, alas! so human, have we indeed the Christian courage and bold resolves to set aside all these, and follow in the higher, nobler, and purer set of principles of another kingdom, — the kingdom of God, in which continency and temperance are loved, respected and observed, as laws? — Thy kingdom come! Have you the spirit of penance for your sins; have you the due sorrow with the true, unflinching resolve, joined to the necessary satisfaction?

God peers through the vista of ages. The images of the elected hosts were distinctly present to His sovereign mind, their number precisely reckoned, but only mistily revealed to us when the Saviour said: "Many are called, but few are chosen." The likeness to Jesus Christ was visible on every elected being. Are you among those foreseen? Are you of the chosen? Place your life side by side with the crucifix and compare. Examine your life in the light of Christ's lovely, patient, self-denying life. Do you observe the Commandments of God? — "If you wish to enter into eternal life, keep the Commandments," says Our Lord.

We need not distress ourselves with the affairs that belong outside the sphere of this world. God placed us here, and here our energies are to be centered. The future will harmonize with the present life we live, as effect follows its cause,

and partakes of its character. Our chief exercise ought to be thrown upon the important fact of a good life, rather than a long life on earth, for we know that we certainly cannot be crowned unless we shall have sternly and manfully combated. To dwell in this world and still to be subject to the divine laws of Jesus Christ; to be in this world and yet not of it, means a sort of exile. There is the loneliness of the desert, there is the solitude of the deep, there is the solitude of genius, there is the deep solitude of virtue, that makes us even in the busy world hermits like Anthony and Paul. We are here, but our heart is with God. What à Kempis says applies to all in a degree: "It is much and very much to be able to forego all comfort and be willing to bear this interior exile of the heart;" for, the heart belongs to God; the heart must love. Do we not give that love which belongs to God to another? Christ felt His exile from His Father's house—"He began to grow sorrowful and to be sad." "What! can you not watch one hour with me?"

There is a sweet loneliness of virtue. Forbidden fruits hang about us in all their delicious nectarous and downy richness. Nature is drawn toward them by her own laws. We walk in a very paradise of proscribed pleasures. Nature yearns, and never tires of yearning, for false liberty; but Reason and Faith keep the savage in prison, bound with strong chains. The dreadful loneliness of virtue will make us moody and sulky, as

men, or scorers of our kind, as philosophers; but, done under the sovereign motive of Christ's sweet love, our exile loses its bitterness: His spirit is ever with us and we surely know that our exile will speedily come to an end. From the pinnacle of our high hopes we see the sweet delights of heaven unfold themselves in interminable glories of the heart and the mind.

Do you experience a loneliness when you observe those about you living subject to the natural laws, subservient to the maxims of this world? Our sympathies are not with them; theirs are not with us. Yes, does not your nature crave a holiday, a short respite from the toils of virtue? "I am delighted with the law of God according to the inward man, but I see another law in my members fighting against the law of my mind and captivating me in the law of sin." (Romans, vii, 27.) But you bear patiently, I know, the solitude of your exile. Perhaps to-day, perhaps tomorrow, in any case, soon, this valley of tears shall fade away from your mortal sight and you shall go to your Father's house, set on yonder eternal hills, where the light of Christian hope so joyously twinkles.

St. Augustine says God calls us out from this world. Does the world discern you as Christians, through your aloofness from it, and the variance of your maxims from its own? Does the pagan world that surrounds you remark upon the stern restrictions you lay upon your passions, and the resolve you have made to yourselves that there

can be no truce with them? Does the world point at each of you and say: Yonder is a follower of Christ — from the character of your life, your unrelenting antipathy to evil of every kind? Ah, brethren, say rather with many of you, could they not exclaim — pooh! pooh! these people live as we do. Are all our Christian women so admirable in their modesty as to shun every semblance of coquettishness? Are they so grand and loyal in their simplicity and modesty as to force a Libanius to exclaim: “The Christians have such noble women!” Is your conversation such as to stamp you as Christians, even as Peter’s speech denoted his association with Christ? “Surely thou art also one of them, for even thy speech doth discover thee.” (Matthew, xxi, 73.) Do we not convert the creatures we encounter in our life into the end for which we were created? Do we not turn this our exile into our true home and rob Our Father in heaven, and our true home of the affections that belong, above, by every right? — “Seek the things that are above.” We were created for God, but how do you look upon death? Is it as the termination of your exile? If so, why these lacerations of your feelings in saying farewell? Surely an exile rejoices when he comes within sight of his home. Ah, perhaps you are attached to the world. If so, you are not an exile in it. You are in the world and you are of it.

But it was not so with the early Christians, our honored ancestors. Their beautiful life forced

the confession of this truth from pagan lips: "The Christians are in the world as the soul in the body. The soul is spread throughout all the members of the body, and the Christians are scattered throughout the villages and cities of the world. The soul abides in the body but is not of it. Christians dwell in the world but do not belong to it." Methinks that many Christians of our own day are found in comparison with the earlier Christians, as we have already observed, to be somewhat like the statues of the first centuries that had been buried in the earth and eventually exhumed only to be brought to the surface minus a joint or several joints, or, it may be, disfigured beyond all recognition. The Christian family likeness has departed from the life and character of many who boast the glorious and honored name, but the delinquencies of the many but serve to make it incumbent upon the few to preserve all the better in their own life and character the noble ideal.

A good conscience ranks among the *signs* of election to future glory—a conscience—one that bears witness that we have been in earnest, steadfast and sincere in our Christian life, rigid with our passions, and unfriendly toward every wrong inclination. Are you such a man as pagans and heretics would set apart in society as being different to themselves; one who thinks and acts upon principles more exalted than their own; such a one as impresses them and all men with the heavenly dignity and truthfulness of Christianity; one

who in leaving the world's busy scene has left in his wake, to the family hearth, in his social life, and in his business associations as well, an image behind him, a memory that clings? Have you spread about you the sweet odors of Jesus Christ that will linger in the world for a blessing long after you are dead?

The world gives its mute testimony to the happy immortality of a virtuous man. With sorrow, brethren, I do feel obliged to make the assertion, not indeed by way of criticism, for which I entertain a deep dread, but as a charity toward you, that multitudes amongst us are 'beating the air.' They are found full ready to confess glibly enough their firm belief in our hallowed religion with their lips, but their actions cannot stand up before the bar of their consciences and hope for acquittal. The Master was the unrelenting foe to bodily softness and sensuous indulgences, from the grotto to the cross. And what, with fasts, vigils, and unceasing labors, His whole life was truly what Kempis characterized it, 'a cross and martyrdom.' Many of His adherents, —but, only nominally such—choke the mustard seed; their lives impede the growth and expansion of the Church: "Those who lead a bad life," says St. Augustine, "and call themselves Christians, do injury to Christ: it may be said of such that they blaspheme the name of the Lord." It is impossible to calculate the evils resulting from the bad Christian life of any individual. A dreadful responsibility rests upon our life: the world

will judge our religion through us—by the fruits you shall know the tree.

How many of our young Christian women, driven by harsh conditions from their native land, take up the humble duties of domestics in foreign lands—in America, or Australia, and by their truly Christian lives, so redolent of the early ages of Christian chivalry, teach society what it is to be a Christian. Their honest, sincere trust, and humble Catholic life does its silent missionary work long perhaps after these noble Irish women have gone home to their Father in heaven. Many a man in the higher grade of social life has traced his conversion to our noble faith back to the prayers and example of one or more of these virtuous women. He recalls their footsteps heard as they emerged before the break of day from the home of their Master, in all seasons and weather, to assist at Mass. He brings back their modesty, their patience, their truth and honesty, humility, and sweet charity. The lives of such women are for building up God's house, which the young men of the period, hosts of indifferent parents and fashion-adoring women conspire to tear down.

The piety that lets the passions rule is false; that which seeks to compromise with them, is soothing but deceptive.

Behold then, the dead Christ! His rapturous form rests on the easel of the Cross—your Model. He died for all men: all I say, then, are sculptors who had laid upon them the exalted, long, ardu-

ous task of reproducing in their own lives the external beauties of the Master's, combined with the internal character of His matchless interior life. The crucifixion is the epitome of the Saviour's life; here we shall find all. The piety that connives at untamed senses is perfidious. In, then, to your flesh let the chisel sink under a hammer swung with the vigor of sternest resolve and the steadfast will to cut away from all vice, to break with all impious association, to sever all that Heaven might behold with a disapproving eye. Be the centurion with your passions,—“I say to this one go and he goeth.” God calls us—let us go out from this world. Wrapt in the foul and dense mists of your lower impulses, all bodily likeness to Jesus Christ is imperceptible to God and to your fellows. Cast aside these hampering indulgences, and let your corporal life step forth from the clay, revealing to angels and men the naked, chaste beauty of Christ's own incorruptible life. Unclothed of his passions, the Christian sculptor's work has begun; aye, more — advanced a stride, though the outlines of Christ are as yet but rough. Our likeness to the Divine Model is but remote; and yet it is some resemblance, and the least that any man may hold up for a sign of his election — the faintest token that he is of the family of Christ.

All are not called upon to reproduce the lights and shades of the Master's life, and to develop that finest resemblance to Him that is the very essence of the monastic life, where the evangeli-

cal counsels flourish. Here we are beyond the Commandments. Each one, however, in his particular station copies Christ when he performs his duty according to that state in which God has placed him. Were the Master in your stead, how would He act in your station? Do likewise.

Ask yourselves if your piety be not little less than ceremonial. Is it enough, then, to assist at the Holy Sacrifice — to mumble, periodically, formulas of prayer in the most perfunctory fashion? Is your piety deep enough? Does your zeal reach down to your prevailing passion armed with the determination to defy and subdue it? “This is My Body,” said Christ,—the Body He made subject to the laws of Divinity, and eventually surrendered to the Father in a violent death. Look at your bodily life: look up into the face of Heaven and make Christ’s words your own: This is my body that I have brought to subjection in imitation of my Master and Model. Do you speak the truth? Do you lie?—“And they who are Christ’s have crucified their flesh with the vices and concupiscences.” (Gal.v, 24.) How many do this? Count them, and you will approximate to the number of the predestinated. Has Christ made a new set of rules for moderns? In North America and in South, in Europe and in India, — ‘all nations to the consummation of the world,’ ‘what I say to you I say to all’ — ‘one faith’ — “If any man will come after Me let him take up his cross and follow Me.” To conquer our passions is our earliest work; this con-

stitutes our external likeness to Jesus Christ, and a dawning forecast of election to glory.

Now, our Lord and Saviour was not mere clay, but a living *man*—God. Our imitation of Him in His bodily life is necessary. When we have overthrown the dominion of passion we are, however, only in the vestibule, and but ready to pass beyond to the inner temple of the Lord's admirable character. Here we find the atmosphere sweetened with frankincense, and the adoring air gently but surely instilling into all the fibres of our being the consciousness of the truth that man was made to adore and serve God, that the *capital sign* of predestination is, without any shadow of doubt, *humility*. This is the foundation of all religion, and all virtues. Lucifer's motto, boldly written, reads thus: "I shall not serve." Christ's standard bore the words: "Thy will be done." As Catholics, our hopes are golden—Thank God we have not protested against authority. When the tidal wave of religious rebellion swept away kingdoms from the Faith, our fathers clung to the masts of Peter's bark.

But our *interior* likeness to Christ brings our election beyond the province of the probabilities on to the realms of human certainty. We must copy the soul of Christ—His motives, sentiments, affections, dispositions and virtues. Amongst these interior features of the Master's life His overwhelming and deathless love for all men was a shining characteristic. The thirst that pained Him on the Cross was not so much the physical

drought that parched His sweet lips and tongue as that interior thirst after the love of mankind—that made His soul like a fair land without water. “Of what use is My Blood?” gasped the Lord, in the throes of His bitter passion, as David tells us. We must have love for our brethren, because they are all God’s children, and the brethren of the Lord—kind words and actions, acts of beneficence, sunny thoughts of them, and help for them in the distresses of body and of soul. This charity is so lacking in the make-up of the rich that Our Lord has Himself declared how hard it is for the opulent to find salvation:—“Amen, I say to you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt., xix, 23.) “And again, I say unto you, that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt., xix, 24.) We should have affection for our brethren for God’s sake. The affluent have not this sign of predestination unless they strive to fulfil their duties to God’s needy children.—“In this we know the charity of God, because He hath laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. He that hath the substance of this world and shall see his brother in need and shall shut up his bowels on Him: now, doth the charity of God abide in him?” (1 John, iii, 16-17.) The First Epistle of St. John then clearly, directly and forcibly brands the uncharitable rich, and all others who have not charity for their brethren, with the mark of repro-

bation: "My children, let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth." (1 John, iii, 18.) It was under the momentum of the supposition that the sweet precept of charity would be accomplished toward our fellows, that the Apostle of love was inspired to say: "Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God. We know that when He shall appear we shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is." (1 John, iii, 2.) The hearts of the rich are as hard as the metal they worship, and their hearts will never melt in sympathy until the metal shall melt and flow out from their hands, into the hungry jaws and parched throats of the starving. I repeat, however, the mark by excellence of the elected of God is humility. Our Lady's canticle, thrice dearer to us than David's rapturous lays, for we know our Mother's graceful lips and soft voice sung it, tells the story of predestination: "My spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Saviour, *because* He hath regarded the *humility* of His handmaid; He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble." "I have chosen to be an abject in the House of God," said Jesus, by the mouth of His prophetic grandsire. "Cultivate humility and you will never be entrapped by the devil," remarked St. Ephraim. The world resists the haughty and self-opinionated: there is an intrinsic repulsiveness felt by mankind toward the spirit of arrogance. The world predicts ruin upon the proud, even in this world.

“Pride goeth before a fall,” is a familiar saw. “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble,” says the prophet. Jesus confirms the truth when He said: “He that exalteth himself shall be humbled,” and when again He says: “Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart.” “As one cannot take a draught from Nature’s founts unless he stoop, bending downward, it is equally impossible to drink of the living fountain of Christ and the pure stream of the Holy Spirit unless we stoop in true humility,” says St. Cæsar of Arles.

It may be said that the most certain sign of one’s predestination is his humility. It has been observed that our Lady had a greater need of this virtue than the saints, because, whereas she was a creature, God lifted her for all, to such tremendous heights of character and dignity. With pride, the current of ruin took its rise, in the bosom of an angel. An angel of darkness brought the germ of it to earth. The harlot will find easier salvation than the Pharisee. Pride is the greatest danger that threatens mankind. No place on earth is free from it, and, strange as it may sound, the holiest people are the most imperilled by it. It is the most difficult task falling within the scope of man’s lot to possess all other virtues in an eminent degree, and still remain truly humble. The proof of this assertion lies in the comparatively small number of the canonized saints. If God has placed us in the lesser spheres of life, we should be slow to

grumble, for we shall enjoy a greater likelihood of being humble, and the farther removed from the terrible danger of self-esteem and self-adulation. Our sins do not deter us from salvation, when we rise out of them more humble: "A contrite and humble heart Thou wilt not despise," said David to the Lord. God suffers men to fall in order to stem the torrent of their haughty pride. "God with the same blow struck down Saul and raised up Paul; struck down the *proud* man and raised up the *humble* man," says St. Augustine. God suffered the lapse of Peter: His design in such a *permission* was to tame the Apostle's high spirit. Sin humbles man. Whatever reminds him of his weakness causes him distress. Before the denial of his Master, Peter had been a boaster: he rose from his sad fall an humble man, a saint — predestinated. I have said, and now repeat, that we must control all our evil impulses, but 'all things work together for our salvation,' and if one fall occasionally, by humbling himself he sucks the serpent's poison from his veins. If you rise up from your sin with a taint on your modesty or sobriety, you may more than repair your error by showing an increase in your humility. Let us cultivate then, above all, the spirit of humility. Obedience to Christ, in His Church and precepts — and for religious to His counsels,—is the highest summit of this wondrous virtue, to which we must at any cost endeavor to attain. When we shall have attained to a perfect humility of *mind* in *faith* and of *heart* in a

blameless *moral* life, united with Christ to our fellow-men, with both hands we shall clutch the key to the kingdom of heaven, and may take to ourselves, without arrogance or delusion, the words of the Lord: "This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." Ah, Jesus, Son of David! So be it. So be it.

But these glorious marks of the chosen ones of God are not attained to without *suffering*, — "For unto this you have been called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example, that you should follow His steps." (1 Peter ii, 21.) Those little works of domestic embroidery that bedecked the walls and hung upon the lounges and easy chairs in our humble Christian homes are not, then, vain ornaments nor even mere preservatives against the gloss or stain of the satin or plush or morocco beneath them. How often our prudent mothers — peace to their ashes — have chosen this means of attuning, from the first, our senses and memories to the capital principles of the faith. Perhaps in point of execution there was not the touch of the artist in them, but the conception was incomparable; and if, in the former instance, there was not the art, there was more — there was piety and the touch of our mother's hand. 'No cross, no crown.' I look back and see the device, like a coat-of-arms, wrought upon the upholstery in the palaces of princes. It is the motto symbolizing Our Divine Ancestor's life and principle, and a steady reminder to us, the children of Jesus Christ, of the

principles that should govern, and in governing, truly ornament our life.

Ave Crux! There is no exception to the law of suffering — “And *all* who will live piously in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” (2 Tim. iii, 12.) The world, the flesh, and the devil will antagonize us bitterly and to the end, but we must hew down these giant enemies. Upon the assurance of St. Chrysostom, we may well believe that the demon is never so wroth and fierce as when he confronts a life being lived in faithful conformity with the holy teachings of the Gospel. He does not trouble his friends on earth. The measure of our suffering is the measure of our certitude of election to future glory. Suffering, then, is not to be regarded by Christian men as an ordeal unnecessary, a bore, — something to be gotten rid of as speedily as possible, and the sooner all the more gain for us. This view of suffering becomes a pagan, but it sits unhand-
somely on a Christian man, a follower of Christ. It was along this line that the Master spoke of His design on St. Paul to the Ananias at Damascus — “This man is a vessel of election to Me, to carry My Name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. *For* I will show him how great things he must *suffer* for the sake of My Name.” (Acts ix, 15, 16.) St. Paul himself teaches that suffering is a *gift* of God quite as well as the faith, and therefore a *grace* — something we should be rejoiced to possess and thankful at receiving: “To you it is given from Christ,

not only to believe in Him, but also to *suffer* for His sake." (Philippians i, 29.) What, that we are to look for and urged to accept the sufferings of St. Paul?—Aye. Ah, but this is something new! Oh, no. So the Apostle has always taught: "Having the same conflict as that which you have seen in me always, and now have heard of me." (v. 30.)

A life free of sufferings makes a bad hand of salvation. — "All they who have pleased the Lord have passed through many tribulations." (Judith.)

A smooth life is suspicious, from a Christian point of view; for, sometimes God pays in this way the reward of what little good we do. When, then, we come to die, we shall have had our reward and can find no recompense awaiting us hereafter—"Blessed are they that mourn."

The great doctors of the Church have expressed themselves distinctly on this point. St. Augustine says: "When God chastises you heavily this is looked upon as a sign that He has destined you to the ranks of the chosen." (Epist. : ad Alip.) St. Lawrence Justinian adds: "To suffer and be patient under the lash is looked upon as being beyond doubt a presage of predestination." (De Cesto Connubio, c, xix.) St. Gregory says: "We recognize the chosen under a life of piety, lived out through harsh sufferings. Suffering is the daily food of the chosen." Let, then, the poor, the sick, the lame, the blind and above all the afflicted of soul who unite a good life to their sorrows

thank God for the sure mark that God has assigned them to the roll of the chosen ones. Such merit our congratulation and not our condolence. Let them not beg their release, but patience to endure all.

Tribulation is the soul of virtue. There can be no virtue where there is no willingness to sacrifice our own will and pleasure. "Heirs indeed of God," says St. John, "and joint heirs with Christ, yet so, if we *suffer* with Him that also we may be glorified with Him." Brethren, let us set aside the past and forget the Lord's prophecy. Let us be good in future, and humble ourselves always; let us henceforth love one another and suffer patiently; and, notwithstanding Our Lord's prophecy, we shall all of us be chosen and not one of us be lost. Our dear Lord wishes this. He is with us.—'Behold, I am with you all days.'—Our Heavenly Mother is by our side. Those who struggled like us and who now dwell in the land of light and peace—the saints of God and the great armies of angels are all for us. We have the sacraments of the Lord and the omnipotence of prayer for unfailing weapons. Jesus is gentle, merciful, only let us strive. If we do our feeble best the Master will do the rest.—The Rabbi knoweth our frame and that we are weak.—He will consider all this.—Go to Him when you are tired and sad. Tell Him your heart. Weep with love upon His merciful bosom. Give Him your full confidence and as He was true to His Father, He will be faithful to you—"Come to

Me all ye that are heavily burdened and I will refresh you." There, leaning against the gate of the Heart of Jesus, you will ask the question: Am I of the chosen? And the answer will come forth softer than the cooing of the turtle-dove, sweeter than the note of the mavis, lower than the music of the mountain rill: "You have not chosen Me, *but I have chosen you.*"

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